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OR,
White Beaver's Red Trail.

"BY BUFFALO BILL,"
(HON. WM. F. CODY.)
AUTHOR OF "WILD BILL," "WHITE BEAVER,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A KNIGHT OF THE OVERLAND.

"Draw rein! put on your brakes! or I kill you and lariat your leaders!"

The words rung out viciously, but clear and threatening, from the lips of a horseman who had just darted out of the shadow of a clump of timber and wheeled alongside of an Overland stage as it was going at a brisk pace along the trail running through what is now the State of Nebraska.

The stage was drawn by six handsome, jet-black mules, which, at the cry of their driver, had bounded forward into a run, almost as swift as the flight of a deer.

It was this that had caused the stern command and threat that opened this story, and as the coach swung swiftly along the knight of the Overland, who had so suddenly appeared, level-

HORSE AND RIDER WERE MOTIONLESS, AND THE LATTER HAD HIS HANDS RAISED ABOVE HIS HEAD, THE PALMS TURNED TOWARD THE INDIANS, AS A TOKEN OF PEACE.

ed a revolver in his left hand at the driver, while in his right he whirled a lariat, as though about to throw the noose over the heads of the leaders.

For an instant the driver hesitated, as though not knowing whether to obey or take the chances; but, as though convinced that it was certain death to him, he said:

"I'll draw 'em in, pard, an' let yer hev yer leetle pickings, fer I know yer."

As he spoke he began to draw in his running mules, and gently put his foot on the brake, which rapidly checked the speed of his team, while the horseman rode by the side of the coach, his revolver in hand ready for use.

Looking out of the coach-window were two faces, one, that of a woman, the other a man, and round, fat, and very much alarmed was the latter.

The horseman, upon whom their eyes fell, was mounted upon an animal as white as snow, with long mane and tail, and a gait that was easy and graceful.

The rider was dressed in deep black, wore top-boots, and a slouch hat, the sable brim being turned up in front and held there by a strange mask that concealed the face from the mouth up, but allowed the latter feature, shaded by a long, blonde mustache, and a resolute chin, to be revealed.

The mask consisted of two scarlet wings, so arranged as to cover the face, and with holes in each, through which two fiery eyes were visible.

The points of the wings extended as high as the crown of the hat, the whole presenting a most singular and striking appearance.

The saddle, bridle and trappings of this strangely masked rider, were of a most elegant description, while his spurs were *gold wings* on either side of the heel, with the sharp rowel in the points.

His revolvers and knife were also gold-mounted, and altogether he looked like some fancy masquerader for a *bal masque*, rather than a bold knight of the road, who had daringly darted out of his covert and ordered the driver of a stage-coach of the Overland trail, bearing Uncle Sam's mail, to—

"Halt or die!"

When the driver had brought his mules to a standstill he said, sullenly:

"Now, Pard Red Angel, speak your little speech, and be quick about it, fer I'm late."

"You have a United States Army messenger inside as a passenger," was the assertion rather than question.

"You is off thar, pard, fer I hes not," answered the driver, a plucky and true "prince of the ribbons."

As though doubting the assertion the horseman rode up to the door, turned the latch and threw it open.

A glance showed him that but two persons were inside—the woman and the fat-faced man before spoken of.

"Don't harm us, good man," whined the latter, pale as death.

"It is not my intention to do so, sir; but you, madam, I must ask to accompany me."

The woman started, drooped her head, and said in a low tone, hoarse with alarm:

"Oh, sir, spare me, I implore you!"

"My dear madam, you plead to Captain Hyena, the chief of the Red Angels of the Overland, who, you know, is merciless to man and woman alike. You must go with me."

"Wal, I declar' ef you makes war on a leddy-passenger I drives I'll make it so hot fer you an' your gang, Cap'n Hyena, as folks calls yer, thet yer'll hev ter emigrate ter new diggin's or I lies like a tin-peddler."

The driver spoke earnestly, but the knight of the road only laughed lightly in response and repeated his words:

"You must go with me, madam."

"Here, pard, I hes a leetle bag o' dust o' my own; thar's a bag o' letters in ther boot, an' thet old man in ther hearse looks as though he were rich, so take what dust yer kin raise and git!"

"The woman must go!"

"I'm durned ef she shall, ef—"

The bold fellow had dropped his hand to his hip, where was the butt of his revolver, and his fingers were grasping it to draw, when there came a flash and report, and the driver fell back dead while the crack of the weapon starting the mules, they bounded away at full speed, leaving the road-agent seated upon his horse on the trail as though momentarily taken aback by the suddenness of what occurred.

But such was not the case, for he was not one to be caught off his guard. His hesitancy for the moment had been at catching sight of a party of horsemen far down the trail, and coming at a canter across the prairie.

"By Heaven! I will not be foiled," he cried, through his set teeth, and a word to his horse sent him flying away in pursuit of the now run-away team of mules.

CHAPTER II.

A DOUBLE CHASE.

WITH nothing to fear from the driver whose coach had really turned into the *hearse* he had

called it, in border parlance, the knight of the road dashed on at a speed that soon drew him even with the coach, though at a little distance to one side, as though he feared a shot from the male passenger, who might pluck up courage to fire at him.

With his revolvers in his belt and his lariat whirling about his head the road-agent showed his plan of action to check the flying mules.

Over the prairie still came the horsemen, five in number, at the same easy canter, as though they had not yet discerned that the team was running away and no driver on the box. They were yet some distance away, and the knight of the Overland was calculating all his chances for success and failure.

Having reached the position he desired, he measured his distance, and was just about to throw the lariat, when a shot came from the stage-coach, and his horse bounded into the air.

"Curse you! that is your game is it? I'll now play mine!" he hissed, as he glanced over his shoulder and saw the face and form of the woman in the stage-coach window, a revolver in her hand, from which she had just sent a bullet after him, and was threatening to send more.

As he spoke the road-agent sent his lariat whirling forward; the noose whizzed through the air, and the coil caught over the head of one of the leading mules, while the well-trained white steed threw himself back upon his haunches to meet the shock.

Instantly it came—the lariat tightened with a loud twang, and the shock hurling the animal in the snare heavily to the ground, dragged his mate with him, and in one instant piling mules, stage-coach, passengers and the corpse of the driver in one grand wreck.

Leaving the struggling animals to extricate themselves as best they could, the horseman cast the end of his lariat loose from his saddle-horn, and springing to the ground, thrust his revolver into the coach window, while he cried:

"Come out of that, madam, for you are not hurt."

No answer came, and tearing open the shattered door, he dragged out a form.

It was the fat passenger, who cried piteously: "Don't kill me, good man!"

"Coward! out of the way, for here is my game. Come, you must go with me."

His hand rested heavily upon the woman's shoulder, and in silence she stepped out, her face as white as death.

It was a strong face, too, with well-cut features, and a look of fearlessness upon it that seemed out of place with the deadly pallor which betokened fear.

Several of the mules had now struggled to their feet, but were in a tangled mass of harness. This, however, was quickly severed by a few strokes of the bowie-knife of the road-agent, and one of the animals being freed was led out of the huddled, struggling mass.

Then came the stern order:

"Madam, let me aid you to mount my horse."

The woman made no reply, but sprang lightly into the saddle, and seizing the reins, a determined light glittered in her eyes—seeing which the masked robber said:

"Be careful, for that horse is trained to obey his master's call. Now, I will be ready as soon as I get your baggage."

"I have no baggage," said the woman, quickly and nervously.

"Only this," and the masked man drew a sachel out of the wrecked coach.

"That belongs to that gentleman," the woman cried, hoarsely, her voice trembling as she spoke.

"Yes, that is mine, sir, and I beg you not to rob me, good man," cried the fat passenger, his face flushing and paling by turns.

"I am sorry I cannot oblige you, sir, for I shall have to take this sachel; but I leave you the mules, what is left of the old hearse, and the body of your driver. Good-afternoon, sir, and tell those gentlemen, who are now spurring forward at such a furious rate, when they arrive, that this is some of Captain Hyena's work, and if they wish to find me, my home is upon the prairies."

Springing astride of the still trembling mule, the road-agent started off at a rapid pace, a word to his white horse causing him to follow, with the most unwilling captive upon his back.

Hardly had he been gone two minutes, when up dashed the five horsemen and drew rein.

An instant they stayed there; then three of their number pressed on in hot pursuit of the daring road-brigand, who had robbed an Overland stage in full sight of five United States cavalymen!

Those that remained by the wreck stood gazing after their comrades and the reckless fugitive and his captive, and praying that at last the Red Angel chief, who had long defied his foes, would be run to earth and have to answer for his crimes.

CHAPTER III.

THE LIFE-CHASE.

THE scene where the daring act occurred, which has been detailed in the foregoing chapters, was upon the open prairie.

Following the trail on ahead with the eye, it

wound over rolling plains, with here and there a divide, a clump of timber, and a fringe of cotton woods or willows on the bank of some small stream.

Looking in the opposite direction, the thicket, which had concealed the knight of the road until the stage-coach dashed by, was visible, a mile, perhaps, from the scene of the wreck.

Then there was a rolling plain for a mile or so, and beyond a view of hills and forests.

It was toward the latter that the horseman and his captive were tending, for he made no halt at the little bit of timber where he had lain in ambush waiting for the stage.

The woman rode by his side in silence, her face bent downward as though she was lost in a deep and painful reverie.

She, however, sat the horse well, in spite of riding on a man's saddle, and, apparently resigned to her fate, allowed the horse to run on at will.

Once or twice she cast furtive glances at her kidnapper, as she saw him turn and glance back at their pursuers, and then there was a look of mingled hatred, fear and anger in the look.

The mule, stripped of his harness, and with only his blind-bridle on, ran with the speed and ease of the handsome white, and seemed both willing and anxious to go.

Mounted upon his bare back, the masked robber appeared as much at home as he had been in the saddle, and kept the pace not too fast, not caring, seemingly, to push the animals to their best speed.

Those who were in chase were an officer, wearing an army lieutenant's rank, and two soldiers, and they were splendidly mounted, and pushing their horses at a pace which gained on those they pursued.

The officer was a young, handsome man, with the air of a dashing cavalryman, and his face was set with a resolve to capture the noted Red Angel chief now "so near and yet far" from him.

He had seen the stage coming rapidly toward him, and the horseman by its side, but had not at once suspected trouble, as he could not believe one man would threaten danger to so many, for the coach generally went through full of passengers.

At last, however, he saw the white puff of smoke coming from the revolver fired by the woman, and instantly it dawned upon him that, though the coach was coming directly toward him and his men, the horseman riding by it was a road-agent.

At the same time he observed that the driver lay back motionless upon his box.

"Ho! men, there is mischief there!"

"Follow me!"

His ringing words were responded to with a cheer, and the party dashed forward at full speed.

But they had not more than started when they saw the smash-up, as one of the leaders was thrown by the lariat, and deep into the flanks of their horses they drove their rowels, to get to the scene.

But the daring and cool knight of the road was too quick for them, and, as the reader has seen, when they drew rein by the wreck, the robber and his victim had escaped.

"Well, sir, what means this?" cried the lieutenant, when he came near.

"We have been robbed, sir, robbed, and a most charming lady kidnapped, while our poor driver was killed, sir, killed, and all by one man *one man*, sir!" almost shouted the fleshy gentleman, who was struggling between fright at his danger, and delight at his escape.

"And who was this one man, sir?"

"The driver called him Captain Hyena, the Red Angel, sir; but to me he seemed more like a black devil."

"Ha! then we are in chase of good game, men."

"You say he kidnapped a lady?"

"Yes, sir; a most charming lady, who told me her sachel was full of riches, and begged me to claim it as my own."

"Killed the driver, lariat a leader, breaking the animal's neck, another mule there with a broken leg, the stage smashed, a mule stolen, and a lady kidnapped with her riches," said the officer, as though taking a rapid inventory of the damage done.

"And I, sir, I threatened and—"

"I am glad to see that you are not hurt, sir, so shall leave men to look after you and the stage," broke in the lieutenant, and turning to two of his men he continued:

"Bolton, as you and Reid are not as well mounted as the rest of us, remain and repair damages as well as you can, and carry the coach on to the station."

"Then return to the fort and report what has occurred, and say to Major Benteen that I have gone in chase of this famous knight of the road."

The soldiers addressed saluted, and the lieutenant with his other two men dashed off in hot chase.

After passing the timber and seeing that it was Captain Hyena's intention to make for the hills, the officer spared not his horses in his endeavor to catch up with the bold robber, for he

knew that the Red Angel chief was reported to have a band of half a hundred lawless followers, and why he had alone made the daring attack on the coach he could not understand, but felt assured he must have aid not many miles away.

"We must catch him before he reaches the hills, men," cried the officer, and the determined manner in which they urged their horses on began to tell, for the outlaw was forced to put his mule at his best.

Yet still the troopers gained, for though the mule was fleet of hoof, those horses on his trail were fleeters.

"We are gaining rapidly, and he must soon come to bay," cried the young officer, with glee, as he saw that ten minutes more would bring him alongside of the outlaw.

But Captain Hyena did not look behind him with any great anxiety, it seemed, nor any more frequently, as his danger increased, for the soldiers watched his every movement closely.

Before him, yet some distance off, lay the hills.

Could he reach them he would be safe, for he could soon find a breastwork to fight behind, if he did not find friends there.

Upon the open prairie, if brought to bay, he must stand and face his foes, three to one, with the woman also to look after.

That the young lieutenant would be driven off the outlaw could hardly believe, for he knew of what material the officers on that far border were made, and that the men would follow his lead was most certain.

So on he urged the black mule, striving to get as near as possible, it seemed to his pursuers, to the hills, before he would turn at bay.

But nearer and nearer came the cavalymen, and a look behind him showed Captain Hyena that the lieutenant had drawn his revolver and would soon use it.

Instantly the bold bandit acted, and with a nerve and promptness that showed him a master of the situation.

"Slide to a seat back of that saddle, and if you slide off I will kill you!"

The words were addressed to the woman, and that he meant what he said she fully realized; so instantly she obeyed.

Then came the order:

"Throw away that revolver you carry, madam!"

He saw the gleam in her eyes, and detected her purpose, for he quickly drew his own and covered her, while he cried:

"Drop that revolver, and then I'll take that empty saddle, and show those soldiers what my noble horse can do."

The woman dropped the revolver in silence, and riding closer, the outlaw threw himself from the mule's back to his saddle on the white horse with a skill that would have done credit to a circus-rider.

But, just as he made the spring, there came the crack of a revolver, and the black mule plunged forward with a wild snort, and fell heavily, the bullet having buried itself in his brain.

"That officer is a dead shot, for his bullet would have killed me, had it been fired an instant sooner; but with you as a shield, I have no fear now, madam," and the outlaw actually laughed.

The woman made no reply, and the white horse, with his double load, at the urging of his master, now bounded forward with an increased speed which began to drop the pursuers, who were almost upon him when the change was made.

"If I only dared," muttered the officer, as he held his revolver ready, as though about to fire.

"No, I must not risk it, for I might hit the woman, and if I dropped the horse the fall would doubtless break her neck.

"But, oh, what a temptation," and he half raised the pistol to a level; but shaking his head he returned it to his belt, and once more urged his tired horse in pursuit with the words:

"Spur deep, men, for that noble horse cannot stand that double weight long, and will soon break his heart under it."

CHAPTER IV.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

CONTRARY to the expectations of the lieutenant, the splendid white horse of the Red Angel chief did not break his heart under the terrible strain put upon him, but continued to gain steadily upon his pursuers, until he dashed into a ravine in the foot-hills quite a long distance ahead of them.

The outlaw had headed for this particular point, seemingly well acquainted with the locality, and once in the mouth of the ravine, he had come to a halt and quickly dismounted, as though determined there to stand at bay, rather than push his horse up the hill under double weight.

On each side of the ravine, for a long distance, ran a cliff, which was unbroken, and the nature of the ground in the rear was such that the man at bay could not be easily flanked, while, as darkness would come within an hour, and knowing the country, he could readily extricate himself from the trap in which he found himself.

"Now, madam, I expect you to aid me in the little difficulty I have gotten myself on your account," said the outlaw, as he led his horse back out of danger. "Stand there, please!"

The woman obeyed, taking the stand against a bank that arose to her waist.

"Now, I will take my place just behind you, and I hope it won't make you nervous to have me fire over your shoulders, for I shall do so if attacked, and that foolhardy young officer seems determined to run to his death."

"You would not kill him?" said the woman, in a low voice.

"As readily as I would you, if my life depended upon it," was the response, and then, with a revolver in each hand the bandit stood at bay, the woman directly in front of him.

Seeing the position of affairs, the lieutenant made up his mind to dash right into the ravine and have it out in a hand-to-hand fight.

"Come, men, we must settle this thing right here," cried the gallant officer, and he rode at a headlong pace directly for the mouth of the ravine.

"Back, sir, back! for he will kill you!" cried the woman, her voice vibrating with emotion.

But the soldier made no reply, and then came the crack of the outlaw's revolver.

Down, headlong, went the horse ridden by the lieutenant, who tried to save himself from a heavy fall, but was unable to do so, for he was hurled to the ground with stunning force, and pinned there by the weight of his dead steed.

As though knowing the result of his shot the outlaw fired again, this time at the nearest soldier, and the man threw up his arms and fell backward from his saddle, dropping in a limp heap, while his horse dashed on into the ravine.

Seeing that his officer and soldier-comrade were both down, the remaining cavalryman wheeled as though on a pivot, and darted away from the fatal spot at full speed to save himself from a like fate, a shot or two from the outlaw following him.

"They will trouble us no more, madam," the road-agent said, quietly, and taking the arm of the woman he led her back into the canyon to where the white horse was standing, and by his side—for he had sped right on into the ravine—was the animal of the slain soldier.

"We are both mounted again, you see, madam. Please take my horse," said the outlaw, with sarcasm, as he caught the rein of the other steed.

"Will you ride off and leave that officer to die?" she asked.

"I will; so be good enough to mount, and lose no time," was the warning rejoinder.

The woman leaped lightly to her seat in the saddle, for the outlaw offered her no aid, and springing upon the back of the horse he held, he said:

"You lead the way."

"Where?"

"Out of the canyon, and up into the hills."

She seized the reins and obeyed, glancing earnestly down upon the dead soldier, and at the officer, who was moving his hand across his brow, as though striving to recall his senses.

He lay upon one side, his left leg pinned down under the body of the horse, and evidently had fallen heavily.

"He can do you no harm, now, so at least release him from his painful position," urged the woman.

"I shall do nothing of the kind, madam."

"He is my foe; he sought my life, and he may die there, or become food for the wolves for all I care. That is our way, up that trail."

She turned her horse into the trail he pointed to, and he followed her on up the hill.

After riding a mile the nature of the ground became wild and rough in the extreme, and they had to pick their way.

Suddenly the outlaw, whose eyes were constantly watching on all sides, spurred to the side of the woman, and seizing the rein, said hoarsely:

"Quick! Come with me!"

She wondered at his excited manner, and glanced about her for a cause for it; but he urged both horses into a fissure in the hillside, which was partly concealed by a few stunted trees.

But a curse escaped his lips as he saw that the ravine abruptly terminated within a few feet, and did not extend into a canyon, penetrating far into the hill, as he had hoped.

"By Heaven! I must take the chances, for to go out again would be to have them see me, if they have not already done so," said the man aloud.

"Who?" asked the woman, her face flushing with hope.

"Wait and see," was the curt answer, and then a moment after came the almost joyous cry from the road-agent:

"Saved! for now my trail will be destroyed!"

Then there came a hurried tramping sound, and a band of elk sped by the mouth of the ravine, and within a few paces of where the outlaw and his victim sat side by side upon their horses, illy concealed by a few stunted trees that grew at the ravine's entrance.

The hoofs of the elks did indeed destroy any trace left by the horses, for there was a large

band of them, and the cloud of dust floated into the hiding-place of the outlaw, temporarily concealing it from view.

The woman had held high hope when she heard those trampling hoofs that aid was near; but when she saw what made the sound, her face again paled, and she wondered at the excitement shown by her captor.

But he still remained in hiding, a revolver in each hand, and she felt that she knew other cause for danger was near, and had not been frightened by a band of elk.

CHAPTER V.

THE SURGEON SCOUT AND HIS BROTHER PARDS.

SEVERAL moments went by in breathless suspense to the woman, and to the road-agent as well it seemed, for he appeared ill at ease, and then the sound of hoofs was heard, followed by a laugh in a man's voice—a voice full of light-heartedness.

Then the outlaw said, in a low, savage tone: "Oh! how I would like to turn that laugh into a wail of woe! But I'll bide my time."

Turning to the woman, he continued in the same suppressed voice:

"Woman, one word, one act from you now will seal your doom, whatever my fate may be, for those coming are the Surgeon Scout and his two brothers, and my bitterest foes!"

As he spoke he pressed his revolver hard against the head of his prisoner, who sat white and motionless upon her horse.

The next instant there appeared in sight a horseman of striking appearance.

He was mounted upon what is known as a buckskin or "claybank" horse, with snowy mane and tail; he was even a more beautiful animal than the white horse of the border bandit. His rider was a man who would rivet the gaze in any assemblage. His manner was easy and graceful, his carriage that of a soldier, while he rode with the air of one born in the saddle, so to speak.

He was tall, his shoulders broad and massive, and his face darkly bronzed and very handsome, while waves of raven hair fell in clusters below his neck, and were thrown back with a jaunty air that did away with the effeminate appearance which long locks often give to a man.

His face was strongly featured, his eyes black and most expressive, and there was that in it to win admiration and love, and inspire respect. He was dressed in the full uniform of a brigade surgeon in the United States Army, and was armed with repeating-rifle, a belt of arms, and a lariat, for the lasso may be called a weapon of offense to those who know well its use.

Just behind this *distingue* soldier-plainsman was a horseman, also splendidly mounted and thoroughly armed; but he was dressed in buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings, wore a sombrero of gray felt, and cavalry boots.

His form was slender, but tall and full of power, and his face most attractive, for his features were stamped with strength of character and well-cut.

His hair was also jet-black, without the shadow of a wave in it, and hung down his back almost to his belt, and he rode with the bold freedom and ease of a Comanche.

Close upon the heels of the second horseman came the third—a younger man than the other two, possessing smaller stature, but one that combined strength and activity, while his movements were as graceful as a woman's.

His face was also dark-hued, but a sunny expression rested thereon that never deserted it even in danger, and yet which could turn to a shadow of deepest sympathy for one in sorrow.

His hair was the same sable hue as was his comrades', but his eyes were as blue as a turquoise—large, full of expression, in which lurked a glimmer of mischief and a trace of recklessness.

He was dressed also in buckskin, top-boots and a sombrero, and "armed to the teeth," while he bestrode a restive, wiry roan stallion, that had every indication of speed and great endurance.

As the three horsemen were all in front of the ravine, and in full view of the outlaw and his prisoner, there was visible that resemblance in their faces which proved kindred blood flowed in their veins.

It was a most critical moment for the knight of the road and his victim, for those three horsemen were "men to the border born," and might cast their eyes at any instant into the ravine.

In fact, nothing would be more natural than for them to do so, ever watchful as they were for danger in their path.

The game behind their saddles proved that they had been off on a hunt and, although the band of elk, startled by their coming, had run near them in their flight down the hill, they had not fired upon them in sheer wantonness to kill, for they had an ample supply of meat with them.

Most fortunate was it for the outlaw that the elk had dashed over his trail, assuredly the eyes of that hunter trio would have detected them.

But now they seemed unsuspecting of danger, or mischief brewing, and were chatting pleas-

antly, for when in front of the outlaw's hiding-place, the laughter of the rearmost horseman again broke forth at some remark of the one next to him.

In that breathless moment of suspense to the outlaw and woman—of fear with one and hope with the other—the two sat motionless, as did also their horses.

A neigh, the stamp of a hoof, would betray their hiding-place, and then all would be lost for the man, all would be gained for the woman.

And there they sat, the outlaw with one revolver ready to fire upon his foes, the other pressed hard against the woman's head, to awe her from movement or outcry.

Another second and the three horsemen would be out of sight, when, suddenly, came in startled tones, deep and strangely silver-voiced:

"Ho, boys! look! there is deviltry going on down yonder!"

At these words the three horsemen drew rein, the last one being still in full view of the Red Angel and his victim, to whom the suspense now became awful.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE RED ANGELS' PARADISE.

THE moment that the three horsemen sat on their horses in front of the ravine, gazing upon the prairie below them, was one full of peril to other than the knight of the road, for his revolver covered the breast of the last of the trio, and had they turned, as though to retrace their way, he, at least would have fallen, however quickly he might have been avenged by the others.

But after the words that told that some discovery had been made by the one in the lead, the three horsemen spurred forward and went down the hillside at a gait that tested their horsemanship and the sure-footedness of their steeds.

In spite of his nerve the outlaw gave a sigh of relief, while from the lips of the woman came a groan, for hope with her fled, as it brightened with her captor.

"Now we are safe, madam," he ejaculated.

"You are," she responded.

"Ah, yes, I am, and my fair captive is also, let me assure her," and there was a sneer in his look and tone.

"As safe as I would be with a Comanche."

"Ha! ha! that is your opinion of me, is it? Well, we shall see; but, do you know, I would rather meet the devil than those three men?"

"Who are they?" asked the prisoner.

"They are called on the border, here, the 'Powell Pard,' and they are a most dangerous set of men to have for foes, as I well know. But, come; let them go their way, and we will go ours."

As the brigand spoke, he rode out of the ravine cautiously, the woman following, and as he turned once more into the trail he saw what it was that had attracted the attention of the Powell Pard, as he had called the three horsemen, for his eyes fell upon the tragic scene he had left upon the prairie, and he saw that the soldier, who had fled to save his life, had returned and was aiding his officer, who was still pinned down by his dead horse.

Still some distance from the spot, but riding rapidly toward it, were the three horsemen, and the road-agent remarked, quickly:

"Come, madam, those three men may soon be back here on our trail, so we have no time to lose."

With this he rode on ahead as swiftly as the nature of the ground permitted, and calling to his white horse to follow, the faithful animal trotted close behind him, and the woman fully realized that she was now wholly at the mercy of her desperate captor.

For several hours the two pressed on in silence, the outlaw following the trail readily in the darkness, and simply riding by the side of his prisoner after the sun went down, as though suspicious of an attempt upon her part to escape, and confident of her ability to do so if he relaxed his watchfulness.

The hills into which they had penetrated were not very extensive, and crossing the ridge, the outlaw held his way along their base upon the open prairie until it was after midnight; then he turned sharply into the dense shadow of the hills once more, and, penetrating a canyon, suddenly halted at the loud command:

"Halt! who comes?"

"The captain," was the answer, and the outlaw was moving on when again came the words:

"Halt! who is t'other one?"

"The other is my prisoner. Is that you, Dead Knife?"

"Ay, ay, cap'n, it are what are left o' me," answered a voice in the darkness.

"You are on the alert, I am glad to see."

"I allus is awake, cap'n, where thar is duty ter be did."

"I know that, Jim, and I intend you shall step into Van's shoes as second in command of the band."

"Thankee, cap'n, an' Van were a durned fool ter persecute that Surgeon Scout, fer he are fatal lightning every time."

"I came near being struck by that lightning this afternoon, Jim, for I met Surgeon Powell and his two brothers, Night Hawk and Broncho

Bill, hunting in the hills. It was a narrow miss."

"Yer was in luck, cap'n, fer if you is a dandy on ther rampage in a skrimmage they kin lick their weight in any man flesh I ever seen; but hain't thet a female woman yer hes thar?"

"Yes, it is a fair prisoner I captured from the Overland coach. But, be on the watch, for those Powells may have struck my trail and followed me here."

"I'll be awake, cap'n, you bet."

The knight of the road now moved on up the canyon, and after a ride of half a mile came to where it widened into a vale, and here suddenly burst upon the view of the poor prisoner a number of camp-fires, dimly burning, but with glimmer of light enough left to show in the background a row of rude tents.

"Here, madam, is the paradise of the Red Angels, and I bid you welcome," said the outlaw, mockingly, and riding up to the door of a cabin that was larger than the others and stood apart some rods by itself, he called out:

"Ho, Brick!"

"Yas, massa; Brick am here, sah," was the answer, as a huge negro came out of the hut.

"Give me a light and then take these horses."

"Yas, sah. Been ter supper?"

"No, get supper for two, as I have a lady friend with me."

"Yas, massa," and a moment after a light shone in the cabin, and the outlaw leader led the woman within, saying in the same sneering tone:

"Captain Hyena welcomes you, my dear madam, to his outlaw den."

CHAPTER VII.

A RETROSPECTION.

THE hut of the outlaw was by no means a tempting abode; yet it was not uncomfortable, and some attempts had been made to have it as pleasant as such a home could be, for the Red Angel band lived in the saddle and were constantly on the move, "bag and baggage."

Who their chief was no one knew, for it was said by his followers that his negro servant Brick was the only one that had ever seen his face. He had been a road-agent on a Kansas trail, it was rumored, and had there been alone in his daring game of robbery—or at least, the negro was his only companion.

Some of his desperate work won him a name that caused him to be greatly feared, and being hunted too close he had gone to another Overland trail to carry on his reckless plan of getting gold.

Again driven away, he had taken up his abode in Nebraska, and soon his name became well known and feared on the northern trails, and a number of bold, bad men flocked to his side and asked him to become their leader.

Bearing the name of the Red Angel, on account of the scarlet mask he wore, he soon became known as Captain Hyena, from his cruelties, while his men knew him simply as Captain Kit.

How many men he had in his band no one outside seemed to know, for it was reported to number all the way from twelve to a hundred.

If he had any regular retreat, or stronghold, the best scouts had been unable to find it, for he seemed to dwell upon the prairie with his outlaws, horses, pack-mules and baggage, and camped but a short while at any place.

The soldiers from the fort had often been on his trail for weeks, to returned disappointed and find that he had attacked some train, or robbed the stage-coach, almost in sight of the military post.

Some time previous to the opening of this story, Capt. in Kit had attacked an emigrant train, robbed it, slain several of the party, and had killed one Richard Joslyn, a gentleman with an only child, who would have fallen into his power but for the appearance of Doctor Frank Powell, the surgeon of the post, upon the scene, who rescued her, though he himself fell into the power of the prairie brigand.

He had, however, desperately wounded the chief, and a compromise was made by which he was to care for Captain Kit in return for his life, for the outlaws had long before sentenced the brave Surgeon Scout, as Doctor Powell was called, to death as their bitterest foe.

Surrounded by a hostile band of Sioux, and their chief lying wounded, the Red Angels were forced to call upon their surgeon prisoner to save them, they knowing his desperate courage and skill as a plainsman and Indian-fighter.

In safety he had led them to the retreat in the hills, where they went occasionally to recuperate and rest; but, in spite of their compact and his services, they sought his life at the hands of an assassin, whose arm was broken by a shot from Powell's pistol, and then as skillfully amputated, and the intended murderer cared for as tenderly as though he had been a dear friend.

When at last the chief and Dead Knife Jim, the one-armed assassin, were out of danger, the Surgeon Scout demanded his liberty, to find that he was to be allowed to go, but ambushed and shot down after leaving camp.

This piece of treachery was made known to him by Dead Knife Jim, who had formed a deep

friendship for the man whom he had attempted to kill, and who had repaid him by breaking his arm with a bullet, and then cutting it off.

Avoiding the danger—being thus forewarned—Doctor Powell struck the trail back to the fort to meet his two brothers. Night Hawk and Broncho Bill,* coming on the search for him, the latter having left his ranch to join the scout in the rescue of Frank, or to bitterly avenge him if he had met his death at the hands of the outlaws.

Back to the fort the three brothers went, and once more himself, the Red Angel chief began again his depredations along the Overland trail and against any unprotected ranch where booty was to be gained.

Loving a life on the plains as he did, and roaming the hills and prairies whenever duty permitted, Surgeon Powell had become known as the Doctor Scout, and his numerous desperate encounters with Indians and road-agents had made him famous, while his brothers, the one the fort scout, the other a ranchero, alike noted for the wild life they had led on the Texan prairies and Rio Grande, were certainly to be feared by Captain Kit; and no wonder he dreaded a meeting with them, and felt that if it came they would prove victorious, even over him, who had robbed single-handed a stage-coach full of passengers, and beaten off four and five enemies when brought to bay.

Thus matters stood at the opening of this story, and what with the robberies of the Red Angels and the raids of the Sioux, that part of the country was certainly a most perilous locality to dwell in, and the man who roamed the prairies without a large force at his back literally carried his life in his hands.

But the "Powell Pard" were men who went alone without fear, and roamed the prairies wheresoever they pleased, taking all chances, the Doctor making at the time almost daily pilgrimages for many miles to the ranch of an old Southern gentleman who had settled there, surrounded by his negroes, who, although "slavery days" were a thing of the past, had clung to him in misfortune as in riches, and had gone with their loved master to seek a home in the land of the setting sun.

A friend to this Southern ranchero, Surgeon Powell had sent to his home the young girl whose father, the dying emigrant, had left to his care, and there she had found a warm welcome, and had become the magnet that drew the handsome army doctor so often to Prairie Rest Ranch, for the child-woman, Janette Joslyn, had won the great, noble heart of the strong man.

When presented to the reader, Surgeon Powell and his brothers were returning from the ranch of Broncho Bill, where the Doctor and Night Hawk had gone to visit their mother, and had loaded their horses with game for the garrison on their way back, Will Powell accompanying them simply for the pleasure of the trip there and back.

Having made the reader acquainted with the situation of affairs, at the opening of my romance, told of true characters, and telling of real scenes and deeds of their lives, I will now pick up the thread of my new narrative.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN KIT AND HIS PRISONER.

"WELL, madam, be seated there, and then we will have a little talk," commanded the chief of the outlaws, motioning to a rustic chair upon one side of the table, while he calmly took another just opposite.

The woman sunk into the chair, in a tired kind of way, and leaned her head upon her hands.

"While Brick is getting some supper for us, we may as well become better acquainted. Do you remember to have seen me before?" asked the Red Angel.

"Your mask hides your face so that I cannot tell."

"Ah! well, as I do not remove it before my men, I shall not before you; but will frankly say that we have met before our meeting the past day."

"When and where?" asked the woman quickly.

"You certainly do not think that I would run off with a strange lady, with really no better claim to loveliness than *you* have? Oh, no, I have better taste than that, and I kidnapped you because we were old friends, and I needed your aid."

"In God's name who are you?" gasped the woman, hoarsely.

"Your name first, please?"

"My name is Mrs. Kirk."

"Ah! so I thought, my dear madam; but now let me recall a little scene in the past to you. Do you remember Richard Joslyn?"

The woman started, and asked:

"What of him?"

* The former, George Powell, at that time chief of scouts at the fort, where his brother was surgeon, and William Powell, then a ranchero and plainsman living in Colorado. Both of these had won their names upon the Texas prairies, but had come to the northern border to be near their brother Frank.—THE AUTHOR.

"He had a confidential clerk, you may remember?"

She made no reply, and the man continued:

"His name was Kirk Kendrick, you know?"

Still no reply, but a start, and a deathly pallor spread over her face.

"And old Joslyn had an adopted son, a youth a trifle fast, and who, spending all of his allowance, sought to get more from the old gentleman by a clever little plan he concocted with this confidential clerk, Kirk Kendrick."

"In Heaven's name, tell me who you are?"

"It matters not who I am, for I know who you are."

"And who am I?"

"Do not be too anxious to test my knowledge of just who you are, but listen to my story of those two young men, the adopted son and the confidential clerk of old Joslyn."

"They having forged his name for large sums, which they received and lost in gambling, he, when the discovery was made, paid the checks, to shield that son from shame and dishonor, and it made a poor man of him. Unable to hold up his head as he had done, when possessed of wealth, he started for the West, and lost his life on these plains when I attacked his train and robbed it of booty."

"But his daughter escaped, and she is now living at a ranch near the Overland trail, having been adopted by an old ranchero, who, with his band of black cowboys, has several times beaten off my men. That girl was rescued from me by the leader of the three we saw to-day, and I am determined to get possession of her, and to do so I need your immediate aid."

"My aid?" gasped the woman.

"I will no longer carry on this trifling, but say to you at once: *in spite of your petticoats, Kirk Kendrick, I know you!*"

"Good God!" The one in woman's attire sprang up quickly, but sunk back as Captain Kit coolly continued:

"My dear Kendrick you always were a handsome, woman-faced fellow, and were wont to have your little jokes at masquerade balls by playing the part of a girl, and you have taken your character well this time, but it has not fooled me."

"The truth is, I know that you are a courier at the fort, and volunteered, when you knew how dangerous I was making it along the trails, to go back to Omaha and meet the paymaster, receiving from him certain money intended for those in the fort."

"You divulged your plan to Major Benteen, the commandant, and he jumped at it; and you played your hand well, only I held the winning cards, knowing your secret; and I have you and your little sachel with its boodle in my power."

"You see, I trumped your best card, my dear Kendrick."

"Who are you?" again asked the man, as the reader now knows him to be.

"Never mind who I am, but understand that I need you and shall use you."

"Never!"

"Don't get excited, for you have been as meek as an old woman since I kidnapped you, and I know you do not wish trouble with me."

The prisoner fairly groaned, and Captain Kit went on:

"Now, Kendrick, serving in the army is very honorable, but—"

"Yes, I am trying to forget the past and live an honorable life, now."

"You can't do it, for it isn't in you, and I verily believe you did not jump the trail with the money in that sachel, because you hoped to get a larger stake in your hands some day."

"No, you are not honest, for I know you, and I intend that you shall serve me."

"But how?"

"First, you must desert from the army," was the cool rejoinder of Captain Kit, the Red Angel chief.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DESERTER.

THE words of the Red Angel chief fell like a savor-stroke upon the disgraced man, who had been called by the name of Kirk Kendrick.

For a moment he seemed unable to speak, and then he said, huskily:

"Desert?"

"Yes."

"From the army?"

"Of course."

"But why?"

"I demand it."

"Who are you?"

"Your master."

"My master?"

"Yes, because I hold your secret."

The man shuddered and asked:

"Will you answer me one question? You knew the adopted son of Mr. Joslyn?"

"As I knew you, I knew him, for you were both thieves."

"He is said to be dead."

"So it was reported—that he was killed in a gambling den in New Orleans."

"A fitting fate; I wonder what will be mine?"

"To die in prison, if you do not do as I demand."

Again the man shuddered, and a look of deep anguish passed over his face, while he said:

"I sinned once, and the remorse I suffered made me repent and vow to live an honest life."

"Once a thief, always a thief," was the laconic rejoinder.

"No, I repented faithfully, for I have a dear old mother who raised me properly, and finding that she knew nothing of my crime, I was determined that she never should. I heard that my partner in guilt was dead, and so I drifted about looking for work, and, being small of stature, I got to be Pony Express rider, and from that I was taken into the army as a flying courier, with a promise of a lieutenantcy, for some desperate rides I made through the Indian country."

"Yes, and you shot two of my men on different occasions, when they merely sought toll of you on our highway."

"They attacked me and I shot them, yes, for I carried valuable papers and considerable money belonging to the Government."

"Oh, you are a good one, I admit, and you played your petticoat part well, and nearly killed my horse when firing upon me from the stage; but, because you are good I want you, as you can serve me well in breeches, or skirts, as the case may be when I need you."

"No, I cannot do it."

"Oh, yes; and you must also desert from the army."

"If I do I will be shot."

"If you are caught; but it is catching before hanging, you know."

"I will not do it."

"Then I will send you to prison for the full length of time that is due a forger and a thief of your ilk, and publish you as such from one end of the country to the other."

"Oh, God!"

"Don't pray and fret, for I am inexorable."

"I cannot sin again."

"Well, you will have the credit of doing so, and I'll have the army after you, for I shall take care to send the story of your career to Major Benteen, and add to it that you arranged with Captain Kit, or Captain Hyena, as they like the name best, to dress up as a woman and have me take you off as a pretended captive, when you were my pard in the robbery."

"That will set the war-hounds on your trail worse than a wolf."

The man groaned, and then Captain Kit asked:

"Now, what will you do?"

"As you wish," came in tones of anguish from the doomed man.

"You will desert?"

"Yes."

"Then go again to the fort, tell how you were carried off captive, and escaped, at the same time being able to seize your sachel with these dispatches and the money. This will place you higher in the estimation of all at the fort. Then begin to work for me; find out certain things that I wish to know; and, when again intrusted with a money package, you will know just what to do with it, and I will share it evenly with you. Do you understand, Kirk Kendrick?"

"I do."

"And will do as I wish?"

"I cannot do otherwise, for I would die if sent to prison. I would prefer death to that."

"Both are to be avoided; but now let us have some supper, and then get some rest. Just before dawn I will call you, a horse will be ready, and you put out for the fort with all speed, and, after sunrise I will start half a dozen men in pursuit with orders not to catch you if they can, but to seem to press you hard. You understand?"

"I am no fool."

"I think you are, and any other man who commits a crime, for I am one; but, having been a fool, I must now be a fiend to destroy remorse. Now come to supper," and the chief led the way out to the camp-fire where Brick had prepared a tempting meal for the Red Angel and his victim.

CHAPTER X.

THE DEPARTURE AND PURSUIT.

TRUE to his promise, Captain Kit awoke his victim, who had dropped into an uneasy slumber, just before dawn. Brick had a tin cup of hot coffee and some breakfast ready, and a horse near by was saddled and bridled.

"Here is your sachel, and you will see that I opened the dispatches, and broke loose the bundles of bank-bills, to show they had been looked over; but nothing is missing. You can say that you arose at night, saw your sachel, seized it, made your way out, and, seeing a horse saddled and bridled, mounted him and rode off. That tells the story. If asked to guide a force here, do so, for I shall not remain in this camp after to-morrow. Now we will start, for you know just what to do."

The disguised soldier sprang into the saddle, seating himself sideways, as became his attire, and Brick leading up the chief's horse, the two rode out of the camp together, passing the senti-

nel on duty at the entrance to the canyon, but who was not the man Dead Knife Jim, who had halted them on their way into the brigand camp.

"Do you know your trail now?" asked the chief, halting just as the sun arose above the horizon.

"Yes; I think so."

"Push on rapidly, for that is a great traveler you are on. I shall put half a dozen or more men in pursuit, when I return to camp; so now be off."

The chief wheeled his horse and rode slowly back to camp, while the man in woman's attire, started at a gallop out of the timber where the two had parted, and struck the trail leading across the prairie.

When known, the face was that of a man, and not of a woman; there were visible certain points and expressions upon it that would certainly be out of place on a feminine countenance, as one might see, did he dissect the features carefully.

The form was slender and wiry, and the make-up perfect—even the movements and voice being womanly at the will of the man.

His face was a handsome one, and had that rare accident in manhood, being devoid of beard, for he never yet had used a razor.

His hair, cut short, had been skillfully hidden under a wig, and his hands and feet were exceedingly small and shapely.

He rode well, although in a constrained position, sideways on a man's saddle, and as he went along, brooded deeply over what had occurred.

That he had repented of the past and reformed there was no doubt; but he had been tempted, when he found himself the bearer of a large sum of money, and, allowing himself to dwell upon the temptation, might some day have fallen and skipped with a large amount intrusted to his care, without the instigation of Captain Kit to do so, which showed that he was at heart a sinner, and came near fitting the words of the chief, "Once a thief, always a thief."

Who the outlaw leader was, the courier could not guess, as his words portrayed:

"I cannot place him to save my life, and yet I know that we have met. He is dead, so it cannot be he; but if he was alive, the blonde mustache and hair of the chief would prove that it was another than my companion in that crime which ruined poor Richard Joslyn, and really murdered him, for he came West to his death."

"How the sight of his daughter, when she was at the fort the other day, struck me with remorse."

"I shunned her, though for her to recognize me, I knew would be impossible under the circumstances, as the confidential clerk of her father has changed, I know, and she hardly knew me then, and was but a girl."

"No, no, she will not recognize me, not dreaming to see me here; but I shall avoid her all I can until I leave."

"It hurts me hard to desert; but what can I do?"

"I am on the rolls as John Kendrick, so no one will recognize that name as mine, and my mother will not see it."

"Well, if I turn to outlawry, my poor mother shall benefit thereby, for I shall send her money enough to buy back her little home and live in comfort, though how she would scorn it did she know how it was made; yes, and it would break her dear old heart to feel her boy was such a scoundrel."

"Well, I am in for it, the die is cast, and I must accept the situation, and, if chance again offers, become honest some time in the future, when I have more money than now."

Thus the man, a scamp at heart, soliloquized, as he rode along over the prairie, his horse in a long, sweeping gallop that cast mile after mile swiftly behind him.

At length he halted to rest, and to refresh himself and horse at a crystal stream that lay in his way.

Leaning against a tree, he dropped into a deep slumber, from which he awoke with a start to behold half a score of horsemen coming over the prairie, evidently on his trail, yet still over a mile distant.

Instantly he knew that they must be the Red Angels in chase, and the sun showed him that he had tarried there several hours.

To bridle his horse, draw up the lariat stake and mount, was the work of a minute, and then away he went, the outlaws, with yells at sight of him, coming on in swift pursuit.

The horse which Captain Kit had given Kirk Kendrick was a good one, and held his own without being pushed to full speed.

The rest he had had also aided him, and the rider seemed fully capable to keep the lead he had.

But it was evident that his pursuers had expected to find him further ahead, and the way they pursued him then seemed to give the idea that they were in deadly earnest about his capture.

"Those men seem to be in deadly earnest," muttered Kirk Kendrick, as he rode along, and he eyed the pursuers with a look that showed suspicion of them.

"But they cannot mean to capture me, if they

have the power, though I cannot understand their seeming eagerness in chase, for there seems nothing to be gained by it here, though it would be well to make the show if near the fort, or where some one could see it.

"Ah!"

The exclamation was caused by having his horse suddenly go down with a heavy fall.

Kirk Kendrick was as nimble as a cat, and in spite of the woman's dress he wore, and being hampered with skirts, he caught on his feet, and saved himself from a broken leg or arm.

The horse did not escape so fortunately, for the animal got to his feet with an effort, and was thoroughly lame.

Springing back into the saddle, however, the fugitive urged him on, though the movement seemed most painful to the poor horse.

Before him the land was broken a little, with timber, a creek, a few hills and divides here and there.

It would be harder work for the injured horse, Kendrick knew, and he looked anxiously back at his pursuers.

They were coming on with the same eagerness as before, and it seemed very certain that they had either misunderstood the orders of their chief, or meant mischief.

Thoroughly alarmed now, Kendrick the Deserter pushed on as rapidly as his suffering horse could be forced to go.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEATH-LOTTERY.

As he neared the rougher country, Kendrick the fugitive became more and more convinced that the outlaws in chase were not obeying the orders of their leader, Captain Kit, for they were steadily gaining upon him.

His horse was too lame from his fall to keep up the race much longer, and then the end must come.

"Did they know him to be a man in woman's garb?"

"Did they know that he had the money which Captain Kit had returned to him?"

"Did they know him as he really was?"

All these questions the man continued to ask himself over and over again, but without being able to answer them with satisfaction to himself.

At length he reached the low ridge of hills, and was just disappearing in the timber, when a shot came from the leading one of the pursuers, and Kendrick's horse went down with a groan, the bullet having shattered his leg.

Again the man saved himself from a fall by his agility, and at once feeling that those on his path meant mischief, he bounded away up the hill, to trip and fall heavily against a tree.

For a moment he was dazed, as the blow upon his head had been a severe one, and he staggered when he arose to his feet, and once more sought to fly and seek some hiding-place.

But it was useless, for the next instant the leading outlaw dashed up with the words:

"Hold on thar, woman, for my weepin might go off an' hurt yer."

The man halted and turned toward the horseman, who just then threw himself from his horse and confronted him.

"Who are you, and what do you wish of me?" asked Kendrick, assuming the feminine voice he so well knew how to use.

"I ar' one of the Red Angel gang, set arter yer by Cap'n Kit, an' here comes t'other boys, seven o' us in all."

"You had no orders to capture me," indignantly said Kendrick, the very picture of an insulted woman.

"Fact, but one o' ther boys found out thet yer carried yer dust back with yer, an' thet it were a handsome leetle pile, so we come ter ther conclusion ter take yer in, git yer leetle money, an' then ter let yer go yer way."

"You dare not rob me."

"Boys, she says we dasn't rob her," cried the man, turning to his comrades, who just then came up.

"Yes, we dare, you bet," cried one, and all sprung from their horses and surrounded the disguised man.

"Well, what is it you wish?" asked Kendrick, with the well-assumed air of an injured woman.

"We wants the gold," said the first speaker.

"I have no gold with me."

"You has paper, an' that calls for the yaller dust, you bet."

"Would you rob a woman?"

"Now you is talkin', we would."

"But you shall not have the money."

"We will."

"I'll resist to the last."

"Better not, fer yer might get shot."

"You surely would not kill a woman?"

"Waal, it kinder looks as though we would, when I shooted at yer awhile ago."

"But you shot my horse."

"I wasn't partic'lar who I hitted."

"Base villains!"

"Oh, we knows our characters well, an' knowin' our wants, we says ter you, give up thet leetle sachel o' dust."

"I will not."

"Waal, we will hev ter take it."

"I warn you off."

"Oh, we hes all been warned an' knows jist all about a woman's howlin'."

"But your chief did not order this outrage upon me."

"No, he gives us orders we was to do, and we concluded we'd do a little work of our own."

"But he shall know of your deed."

"I guesses not, for he'll think you got kilt by Injuns, you know."

"No, he shall know that I was robbed by men of his band."

This was a poser for the outlaws, and they were silent for an instant, when one asked:

"How'll he know it?"

"I shall tell him."

"Oh, you will?"

"Yes."

"Waal, pards, ef she is gwine ter tell on us, we hed better keep her from doin' it."

"But how kin yer stop a woman's tongue, Jake?"

"I admit there be but one way."

"And how are thet?"

"Dead tongues don't wag, pards, even if they is women's."

A silence fell upon all at this, while Kendrick turned deadly pale.

Would they really kill him, he wondered?

Alarmed by the approbation the remark of their leader seemed to meet with, he said:

"If I swear not to tell your chief, you will not kill me?"

"Yas, fer a woman hain't ter be trusted with a secret."

"Then take my money and spare my life."

"Can't do it, fer we is greedy enough to want both."

"Say, boys, let us kill her."

"All right, Jake, ef you says so; but I hates ter kill a woman."

"Whar's ther dif'rence, pard, atween a man an' a woman, whar killin' is ter be did?"

This argument seemed to be unanswerable, and the outlaws nodded consent to the devilish act, while one asked:

"Who are ter do ther killin'?"

No one answered, and again came the question:

"Who are ter do ther killin', pards?"

"Waal, let us draw lots fer who are ter do ther work," said Jake.

Each man ten took a piece of gold of a like sum from his pocket, and, making a mark upon one piece, threw all into a tobacco-pouch.

Then the gold was shaken up, and each man put in his hand and drew a piece out.

During this scene of drawing lots to see who should be his murderer, Kirk Kendrick stood like a statue, white as death, and gazing at his captors, who faced him, some ten feet from him.

Each man, in spite of their sinful lives, seemed to feel relieved when he drew out his hand from the tobacco-pouch, and saw that he did not have the marked gold-piece.

One by one they drew for the fatal coin, in that death-lottery, and at last all had drawn but Jake.

"You is elected, Jake."

"Yer has ter do it, pard."

"Take a knife fer it, Jake, fer it are more pleasanter ter die thet way."

"No, shoot her, Jake."

"Drown her in ther creek, pard."

"Yas, hold her under ther drink, Jake, an' she'll soon give up her life-grip."

"Pizen her, pard."

"Make her shoot herself, so's yer won't be guilty an' see her ghost o' dark nights."

Such was the advice that Jake received, and he stood calmly through all until the last, when he was threatened with seeing the ghost of the supposed woman.

At this he turned pale and hesitated, and observing it, and as they were not to be the ones to kill her, his comrades began to nag at him with jests that soon forced him to say:

"Pards, I has drawed ter be elected fer ther work, an' durn me ef I hain't got ther sand ter do it, though I never kilt a female afore."

"Now, ledly, jist tell me how yer prefer ter die, for I are a marcfiful critter, an' wants ter obleege yer as ter ther style o' death yer think yer would like best," and the villain turned toward the supposed woman with a look in his face that showed he had fully made up his mind to kill her.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WIZARD TRIO.

KIRK KENDRICK had gazed breathlessly upon the drawing of the lots, for the honor of putting him to death, and feeling that he was wholly in the power of his foes he knew not what to do.

It flashed through his mind to tell them that he was not a woman, but a man; but then came the thought that they would be that less merciful to him.

Hardly knowing what he did, when Jake, the outlaw, turned to offer him his choice in the manner of dying, he whipped a revolver out of the folds of his dress, and as quick as flashes fired several shots and bounded away with the speed of a deer.

The outlaws were not only astounded, but one

of them dropped dead, a bullet through his heart, and a second had been slightly wounded, and, amazed at the act and aim of the woman, as they supposed, they were momentarily demoralized, and Kendrick had a good start of his foes before they started in pursuit.

Mounting their horses, then, in hot haste, they spurred on in chase, having hastily stripped their dead comrade of any money and valuables he had about him, and left his body to the coyotes.

Of course, hampered as he was with his skirts, Kendrick could not keep up the speed he held at starting, nor could he hope to outrun the horses of his captors.

Still he held his own for awhile quite well, until he struck the slope leading to the top of a heavily-wooded ridge.

Here his strength began to fail him, and the outlaws gained rapidly.

Fifty yards more and he would reach the ridge and the line of trees, and then could turn at bay on his foes and at least sell his life dearly, perhaps killing one or more of his pursuers.

But those on his track were not a hundred yards behind, and yelling like demons, they were pushing their horses hard, Jake shouting to his comrades:

"Let's skeer her ter death an' then I won't hev ter kill her."

Panting, staggering and frightened to desperation, Kirk Kendrick ran on; but human nature could stand no more, and he sunk to his knees, raising his revolver and facing his enemies to the last.

A wild shout came from the outlaws, and a moment after they had surrounded their victim.

"Come, pards, I gives a hundred dollars ter each man who stands up with me an' fires on this 'ooman at ther word," cried Jake, who had been the one to whose lot it fell to kill Kendrick.

"I speaks for a hundred."

"Me too."

The cries came from two of the worst of the band, and Jake promptly took out his wallet and counted out the money, the prisoner kneeling the while and gazing breathlessly into the merciless faces of his captors.

"Thet's it; now we'll jist stan' heur an' fix this up prime, fer I doesn't want ter know thet I kills her all alone," said Jake, feeling no compunction at the diabolical act, but a dread of seeing the ghost of his victim afterward.

The three men now took their stand ten paces away from Kendrick, who still knelt where he had sunk down in his flight.

He was calm now, for he had given up hope, and with hands tightly clasped faced his intended executioners.

Apart from the tragic group were the rest of the outlaws, holding their horses and gazing on with interest.

"Pards, is yer ready?"

"Yas."

"I is."

"Waal, when I gives ther word fer—"

A pistol-shot silenced his tongue ere the sentence was completed, and over the ridge bounded three men, a revolver in each hand.

"Ther Wizard Doctor an' his Brother Pards!" came a warning cry, and as one man the outlaws bounded to their horses, sprung upon them and rode down the slope like mad, without firing a single shot at the enemy, though a horse went down and a rider was wounded by the rattle of the revolvers in the hands of the Wizard Trio who had come so unexpectedly upon the scene.

From the brink of the grave to life was such a change for Kirk Kendrick that he could not speak as his preservers ran up to him, and Surgeon Powell said:

"Thank Heaven, my dear madam, we were in time, and had the nature of the ground permitted us to ride our horses over the ridge, we would run yonder scoundrels to earth; but, as it is, we have one for a souvenir," and the Doctor pointed to Jake, who had fallen by his revolver, the bullet entering his brain, although the shot had been a long one from the top of the hill.

With an effort Kendrick regained his powers of speech, and said, as he held forth his hand:

"I see that you do not know me, Surgeon Powell."

"We have certainly met before, madam, but I must appear rude enough to forget where," and Frank Powell spoke in the courtly way natural to him, and in a voice that was deep-toned and musical, and which had gained for him the name among the Cheyennes of "Music Tongue," so modulated and sweet is his utterance.

With death no longer before him, Kirk Kendrick had regained his nerve, and smiled, while he said:

"I am from the fort, sir."

"From the fort?" repeated the surgeon, while Night Hawk Powell remarked:

"I am chief of scouts there, madam, and do not remember to have seen you there."

"I am Kendrick, the courier, Surgeon Powell."

Frank Powell gave a long whistle, Night Hawk uttered an exclamation of surprise, while Broncho Bill muttered:

"A courier in petticoats!"

"I will explain, gentlemen, for an explanation is necessary."

"It is in order, Kendrick," dryly said the Doctor.

"Well, sir, I knew the paymaster was worried about getting some money that had been left for him back on the Overland, and I told him I would bring it through in the disguise of a woman, and he and Major Benteen agreed to it."

"I have often dressed up in female garb for fun, and so knew just what to get and how to wear it, and here I am."

"But this is a long way off the Overland trail, Kendrick, and we found you in a bad fix."

"I admit it, sir, and also that I owe you my life, Doctor Powell."

"Don't speak of that, madam—I mean my man; but, tell me, are you the supposed lady who was taken from Burns's stage-coach yesterday?"

"Yes, sir—the same."

"The Red Angel chief, Captain Hyena, captured you?"

"Yes, Surgeon Powell, for in some way he either penetrated my disguise, or had a spy upon my actions, and knew that I had the money."

"He forced me to go with him, and when we were pursued by the lieutenant and his men he beat them off."

"Then we were hidden in these hills when you three gentlemen rode by within a few feet of us, and, discovering the lieutenant down on the prairie, you went rapidly to his aid, while Captain Kit carried me on with him."

"Whether it was that they did not deem it possible for me to escape or not I cannot tell; but I did make my escape last night, took my sachel of money from the spot I saw the chief hide it, and left the camp, to be pursued and overtaken as you saw."

"And these men meant to kill you, too?"

"Yes, sir, and go back and tell their captain that I escaped, while they meant to divide the money between them."

"The cut-throats!"

"Well, Kendrick, you have had a rough time and a close call from death."

"We went to the aid of the lieutenant and he told us what had happened to the coach, so as soon as we had gotten him in shape to go on to the fort, we took the Hyena's trail and were following it, when a shot fired some time back, caused us to leave our horses and come to the top of this ridge."

"It was the rifle-shot that brought my horse down."

"Doubtless, and when we got here we saw your gallant race for life. But, these fellows have left you a horse there, I see, and we will go on to the fort with you, for you carry a valuable package as I know, and important dispatches, too."

A fire was then built over beyond the ridge, and, after enjoying a good meal, the three brothers, who had put the outlaws to flight, started off on the way to the fort, Kirk Kendrick mounted upon Jake's horse, accompanying them, and happy that his story had held good throughout, and that he would not be suspected as having allied himself to Captain Kit, the Red Angel chief.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DWELLERS ON THE PLAINS.

THE gallant commandant of Fort Platte certainly had his hands full, with the Indians constantly ready to make trouble, the Red Angels always haunting the trails to rob and murder, and but a small force with which to keep down the numerous foes that beset him.

The fort was well situated for defense, and for offense, for troops could be sent from it to any point where danger threatened, and its garrison was kept constantly on the *qui vive*, while the cavalry were on the march five days out of the week.

The chief of scouts, and who was at the head of half a score crack plainsmen, was George Powell—Night Hawk George—than whom no more gallant and skillful borderman lived on that dangerous frontier.

Day and night he was on the move, scouting into the Indian country, and along the trails, until he had become noted as a prairie rover who had no fear.

His men were also to be relied upon; but there was one man at the fort, whose duties were far different from those of a scout, and yet who had won fame along the frontier as a scout, guide and Indian-fighter.

That man was Frank Powell, the surgeon of Fort Platte, and a man who was loved by his comrades as much as he was hated by his foes.

With a passionate love for the wild life of the prairies and mountains, he was nearly half his time doing scouting duty, until it was jokingly said of him he was hunting for enemies to shoot that he might practice his surgery upon them.

Will Powell—Broncho Bill, the Texan—was a dweller upon his ranch, a long distance from the fort; but he, too, was a born plainsman, and was often wont to visit his brothers, and the three start off together on a scout, which would terminate badly for any foe they happened to encounter, while, with perfect confidence in their own powers, they would penetrate to the very center of the Indian country, and bring warnings of danger brewing among those natural enemies of the white men.

Their many daring deeds together, the desperate dangers they had escaped, and their deadly aim and superb marksmanship, had gained for them the name of the Wizard Three, or Trio.

It may then be imagined by the reader, that when Kirk Kendrick found himself in the company of these three daring men, he no longer feared the outlaw band, even did Captain Kit come with his entire force of cut-throats.

As the four men, Kendrick still in his feminine attire, neared the Fort, Frank Powell said:

"Boys, I will branch off here for Prairie Rest Ranch, to visit Major Monkton, and come on to-night to the fort."

"Yes, you'll go and see the major, you will, Frank," answered Broncho Bill slyly, with a wink at Night Hawk, who answered:

"If the major is not at home, Frank, you will come right on to the fort?"

The handsome surgeon blushed, for he knew that he had used Major Monkton's name to hide that of Janette Joslyn, the fair young girl who had won his heart.

But he responded:

"If there is no one at the ranch, boys, excepting the cowboys, I will come right on to the fort, for, as you know, I am determined to carry out the plan I suggested about going to the Indian country."

"No, no, Frank; reckless as you are, you must never do that," protested Night Hawk, warmly.

"So say I, Frank!" as earnestly rejoined Broncho Bill.

"Well, we will talk it over when I come to the fort."

"If you don't find Janette at home, Frank, she may be visiting with the major at the ranch of that handsome young cattle man, his nephew," called out Broncho Bill, as the surgeon rode on his way alone, leaving his brothers and the courier to go on to the fort.

A ride of several hours brought him in sight of one of the most comfortable ranches at that time on the plains.

It had really the appearance of a stockade garrison, or fort, and was delightfully situated upon an eminence overhanging the river, and surrounded with a grove of timber.

The hill sloped gently down from the stockade fence to the prairie upon three sides, and upon the fourth was the river, so that the place was well guarded against surprise.

The pens for the cattle, in case of danger, were large and comfortable, stacks of hay were visible in quantity, and a row of small cabins were near, where lived the "help" of Major Monkton, and which help had once been his slaves in the Sunny South, but had followed their dearly-loved master to the land of the setting sun.

A fine garden, a field of corn, another of wheat, and a large herd of cattle, a flock of sheep, a number of hogs, and a band of ponies, showed that the master had some wealth, and was a most thorough manager, determined to have about him even luxuries in his far-away home.

Among the major's "curiosities," as the other rancheros called his comforts, were his cowboys.

These were a band of twelve or fifteen negroes, perfect horsemen, crack shots, clad in buckskin, armed to the teeth, and brave as lions.

Several of these black cowboys were guarding the cattle on the prairie as the surgeon rode up, and they greeted him in a way that showed how highly they respected the soldier and the man.

"The major at home, Zip?" asked Frank Powell, addressing the tall young Hercules, who was the "captain" of the little band of colored comrades.

"No, sah; but Missy Janette am dere, an' dat am de same, I guesses, sah!" answered Zip, showing his ivories in a way that expressed the belief that he knew the surgeon asked for the major as a "blind."

"Well, I will ride on and see her."

"Any news of the Indians?"

"Dey is said to be troublesome up north o' here, sah."

"Well, I am going north to-morrow, and I will find out just what they are about, Zip; but keep a bright lookout at all times, for these are perilous times, and those Red Angels are as much deserving of watching as the red-skins."

"Yas, sah, I thinks they is bad as de Injuns; but you know 'em pretty well, sah, as you was deir prisoner."

Frank Powell then rode on up to the ranch, and dismounted in front of the major's cabin.

It was a log-house, with four large rooms in

it, a piazza, and there was about it an air of refinement in spite of its rude exterior.

Flower-beds were visible here and there, vines ran up the posts that supported the piazza roof, and curtains were seen at the windows, while a cosey, home-like air rested upon all.

As the surgeon dismounted from his horse, a little negro boy, knowing that he was safe for a reward, came and took the bridle, while he said:

"Missy Janette sleep in de hammock, sah, an' massa am gone up de ribber wid de boys, sah."

Frank Powell, with a pleasant word to the negro boy, passed around the corner of the cabin where he knew the hammock to be, and came upon a picture worthy of an artist's pencil.

In the slightly-swinging hammock—a home-made affair of grass and shucks—reclined a young girl of great beauty.

Her features were cast in a mold of perfection seldom seen, and her golden hair clustered about her in heavy tresses.

She was sleeping sweetly, and yet, with the closed eyes, the face was full of expression and sunshine, for a smile played upon her lips as though she was dreaming of some happy scene.

She was dressed in white, a sun-hat, evidently made by the same negro artist that had manufactured the hammock, lay on the ground near her, and a dainty foot was just visible peeping from beneath her skirt.

"It seems a shame to waken her," whispered Frank Powell.

Perhaps it was his presence, but as he spoke she opened her eyes and, with a blush, sprung to her feet and greeted him.

"Oh, Frank! where have you been this long time?" she asked.

"First, give me my forfeit for catching you asleep, Janette."

"No, sir; you do not deserve it for standing there staring at me until you wakened me, and again for staying so long."

"But, where have you been?" and she led the way around to the piazza.

"I told you before I started, Janette, that my brother Will was coming up to the fort for a hunt with George and myself, and that is where I have been; but I have considerable to tell you about it," and Frank Powell told of his finding the young officer lying with a broken leg under his dead horse, and what had followed, to all of which the maiden listened with breathless attention.

"But, Janette, there is something else to tell you," he said, when she had commented upon his adventures.

"Nothing to bring you into peril again, I hope, Frank?" she said.

"As for that, Janette, my life is a daily peril; but what I wish to say is that I will have to leave you for a few weeks."

"Oh, Frank! where are you going?" and the face saddened.

"That I cannot tell you; but I feel that my duty calls me away for some little time."

"Frank! Frank! this life you lead will kill me."

"Or me," he said with a smile.

"Yes, and I'll never be Mrs. Powell," she rejoined in a mischievous way.

"Oh, yes, for there is my brother George, and if the Indians should scalp him, there is Will, and he has a home already and only needs a sweet little wife in it, and our mother would welcome you most warmly, I assure you, and not make one of those terrible mothers-in-law you read about."

"Frank, don't joke about serious things, for I feel you are going away to face some great danger, so great, in fact, that you dare not tell me of it."

"No, no, Janette, it is not so terrible, I assure you, at least to me, and I hope to soon get back, and then claim my little sweetheart for my wife."

"But the major has gone up the river, I hear."

"Yes, he went with some of his cowboys hunting, and also to make cousin Paul a visit."

"But, Frank, do you not like Paul?"

"Indeed I do, Janette, though I cannot help but think that if I had not gotten a mortgage on you first, he would have won you."

"Nonsense, Frank, for Paul was my adopted brother, you know, and poor papa loved him so dearly."

"His father helped my father once, and when Paul became an orphan, papa adopted him, and it thus went on until he got into speculations which swamped our fortune."

"Paul left, declaring he would yet pay back all he had caused father to lose, and I never heard of him again until I met him here as a ranchero, where poor papa was coming with the little he had left, to build a new home for us in this wild land."

"But is it not strange that Paul, my adopted brother, should turn out to be Major Monkton's nephew?"

"Yes, but strange things occur daily in our lives, Janette, which, if told in novels, would be set down as utter fiction."

"Yes, that is true, for just to think that dear old Major Monkton, who had so long lived alone

in the world, now has an adopted daughter in me, and a son in Paul, for the major says he intends to make his nephew his son and heir, and that he is to take the name of Monkton; but here they come now, as we speak of them, so the major must have met Paul on the way here."

As Janette spoke, two horsemen rode up to the cabin and dismounted.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRANK POWELL PLAYS A STRONG CARD TO WIN.

THE two horsemen who advanced toward the cabin were both men calculated to attract attention anywhere.

The one was a man well advanced in years, with a noble face, a trifle saddened perhaps, and long white hair and beard.

This was Major Monkton, the one-time Southern planter, who had had sorrow and reverses that had made him glad to seek a new home in the wild Far West.

The other was a young man, with a winning, handsome face, black hair and mustache, dark, expressive eyes, and a look of firm resolve to do and dare anything.

He was tall, well formed, strong as a lion, upright as an Indian, and graceful in every movement.

Both men were dressed in border attire, and armed with rifle and revolvers, and their horses were fine animals that had go and endurance in them.

"Well, Surgeon Powell, you are keeping my little girl from being lonesome, I am glad to see," said the major in his hospitable way, as he advanced and grasped the hand of his visitor, while his nephew did likewise, remarking:

"I fear Janie would have a dull time of it but for the visits of Surgeon Powell."

Frank Powell made some pleasant response, and then all adjourned to supper, and old Aunt Phoebe had certainly done her best as was her wont.

"To git su'thin' ter make de gemmens eat wid de relish ob a wolf," as she expressed it.

To Major Monkton and his nephew Frank Powell made known his intended departure upon a secret mission, though he did not state just what that was.

That it was full of peril they did not doubt, and, anxious to find out what it was he intended to do, Janette called Paul aside and said:

"Now, Paul, you are as good as a Philadelphia lawyer at questions, so try and trip Frank up and see if we cannot find out just what he intends to do."

"I'll try, Janie, but that same Doctor lover of yours is as shrewd as the alleged Philadelphia lawyer, and is not to be tripped; but I'll do what I can, for I confess to a curiosity myself to know what he is after."

And in an ingenious way the young ranchero began his task, to find, when Surgeon Powell arose to take his leave, that he knew no more than he had before known about the affair, and that the expedition was a secret which was not to be revealed until the doctor felt it should be.

A grasp of the hands of the gentleman, an unseen parting out on the little piazza from Janette, and Frank Powell mounted his horse and rode away in the darkness, leaving anxious hearts behind him at the unknown danger he was to face.

As he rode along upon the prairie he suddenly came to a halt.

It was a cloudy night but in the eastward there was a streak of clear sky close to the horizon, and the rising moon was brightening it like a shield.

And upon this bright spot were photographed two horsemen.

They were riding in the same direction that Frank Powell was going, and they came to a halt just on the ridge and dismounted.

That they were upon the trail he was to follow, the one he had worn well between the Monkton Ranch and the fort, he was well aware.

They were white men, too, and not Indians, he discovered.

If honest white men, no matter what their haste, they would not have passed Monkton Ranch without stopping.

That they had passed it was certain, as they were going along the trail that led by its gates.

"It looks to me as though those fellows had been on my trail and were going to ambush me."

"They have waited outside till they heard the major call to the stables for my horse, and then they rode on ahead."

"Well, I am glad it is cloudy, and I am thankful for that little bit of clear sky that gave me a glance of them."

"Now to see if I cannot play to thwart them."

So saying, Frank Powell dismounted. First he took off his cavalry boots and put on a pair of moccasins, taken from his saddle-pouch.

Then he took a woolen shirt from the same leather pocket, and cutting a quantity of grass with his bowie-knife, he stuffed it full.

Drawing off his coat, he placed it on the stuffed shirt, and fastened together with his lariat the dummy figure, holding it upright in the saddle

with his rifle, which he tied in position, putting his sombrero on top.

With the boots then tied in the stirrups, the dummy certainly looked the man at a few paces distant in the uncertain light.

"Now, old horse, go on and keep the trail, and pardon me if I tread on your heels," said Frank Powell.

The intelligent brute seemed to understand that something was wrong which he had not discovered, and he moved off on the trail at a swinging walk, the doctor keeping close upon his heels, stepping with him like a soldier marching, and holding on to his tail to retain his position.

With his body bent forward, and his right hand grasping a revolver, the doctor moved on, the horse keeping the trail well, and heading directly for the spot where his master had last seen the two horsemen.

To a close observer, even one toward which the horse was coming, it would not be observed that he had a little game to play that would thwart a hidden foe.

The whole thing looked so natural at a little distance, and in the semi-darkness, that an Indian even would have been deceived.

On toward the rise in the prairie the horse went, and soon the decoy was within twenty paces of the ridge; then came a click, followed immediately by a shot, and a dull thud told that the bullet had struck the dummy fair, while a pull on the lariat by the Doctor's hand caused the stuffed form to fall from the saddle, and a word brought the horse to a halt.

"Got him! ef I hain't, durn me!"

"Bully fer me! I hes kilt ther Doctor Scou, ther greatest terror on these roarin' prairies!"

"Now fer his scalpan' ther dust!" shouted a voice, seemingly wild with glee, and two forms arose above the ridge, and one advanced rapidly toward the spot, utterly reckless of caution, in his joy at having killed, as he believed, the famous Wizard Doctor of the Platte.

But suddenly a tall form sprung away from the side of the horse, and a voice cried:

"Don't count your chickens before they are hatched, villain!"

With the words a shot rung out, and a death-cry almost mingled with it, while in a shriek came the words:

"Kill him, Dead Knife, for he hev played it on me!"

With the words the man sunk down upon the prairie, while his comrade some distance behind him cried:

"Dead Knife Jim are playin' hands up jist now."

"Here, Doc, ther one fin yer left me are p'intin' up ter glory, and don't yer forgit it!"

Then up above the head of the speaker went a single hand, while Doctor Powell, still standing as he had when he fired the fatal shot, called out:

"Is that you, Dead Knife Jim?"

"It are, Pard Doc."

"Is it war or peace between us?"

"Peace every time, you bet, Doc."

"All right: are you alone?"

"Only that durned fool gerloot yer jist made cold meat of, ef he are dead."

"He is dead; I shot him through the heart," was the cool, confident reply of the man, who stood ten paces from the one he had fired upon.

"Waal, you knows, Doc, jist whar your lead goes when yer slings it out o' ther iron; but don't yer believe thet I put up this leetle job ag'in' yer."

"Come here; but come with your arm up," said the surgeon, and the man advanced toward him, still holding his one arm above his head.

CHAPTER XV.

DEAD KNIFE JIM AND THE DOCTOR.

"WELL, Jim, you are in bad company, as usual," said the Wizard Doctor, gazing into the face of the man as he approached.

"I hain't goin' ter lie, Doc, fer I was in bad comp'ny, but I is in good comp'ny now, seein' as you is my pard at ther present, an' Lanky thar hev gone ter jine ther dead folks."

"You are complimentary at least, Dead Knife; but I am surprised to find you lying in ambush for me."

"Pard Doc, you is on an' you is off thar, fer I was an' I wasn't. Now let me tell yer thet when ther band tuk you priz'ner, I were your inimy, an' I showed it by tryin' ter run my knife inter yer back, but I were not soon enough, an' got yer bullet in ther arm I ust ter hev on this side."

"Now you chopped thet arm off fer me in beautiful style, an' were so good ter me thet I loved yer fer it."

"And that is why I wonder so that you, after professing friendship, should attempt to kill me."

"I didn't do it, Pard Doc. Yer see, ther chief offered big money to ther man as would fetch in your scalp ter camp. Lanky agreed fer ther job, an' I, knowin' he were a bad 'un, agreed ter go with him. We sot out ter onc't, an' struck your trail with thet o' yer two brothers, ther Night Hawk an' Broncho Bill, along with ther gal as dug out so lively from our camp."

"Now, Lanky said it were bad enough to tackle you, an' he were not lookin' fer any extra music in ther shape o' your kinfolks, an' we were about ter postpone ther job when we see you separate an' go alone. Then we waited an' tackled your t ail and followed it up to ther Monkton Ranch."

"We know'd yer'd not stay long, so we waited, an' heerd ther major callin' ther nigger ter fetch yer horse. Then we comed right here, fer we know'd as how you'd take this trail. We tuk our horses over ther rise, an' lay quiet until we seen yer comin'."

"Now, Doc, I hain't one ter blow my own horn o' praise; but I comed with Lanky ter save yer."

"To save me?"

"Yas, Doc."

"By ambushing me?"

"Did yer hear two guns go off?"

"No."

"Hain't my pistols here loaded full?"

"I will see," and after scrutiny, the surgeon said:

"They are loaded."

"Did yer hear a click sound just afore ther gun tooted?"

"I certainly did hear the click of a hammer, as though a weapon had failed to discharge."

"Thet were my leetle gun."

"Ah! you tried to fire at me then?"

"You is wrong, Doc, fer my revolver were aimed at Lanky."

"At your comrade?"

"Fact."

"Why so?"

"Waal, I hain't no love fer ther man, an' I hes fer you, an' I jist intended ter put a bullet in his brainpan afore he shooted you. He thoughted I fired at you, an' cussed at my gun fer missin', an' fired right arter."

"Waal, you knows what follered, an' thet are all I hev ter say, Doc, so jist do as you thinks best."

"Jim, I believe your story, in spite of your being such a devil, and will trust you. Here is my hand on it, and I thank you for your effort to save my life."

"Don't mention the circumstance, Doc, but believe thet Dead Knife Jim are your pard at heart, even tho' yer did git one o' his arms, an' he are a outlaw o' ther band o' Red Angels."

"And now which way, Jim?"

"Yer don't intend ter run me in, an' hang me then at the fort fer ther eddification o' ther sojers, an' as a lesson ter sinners in gin'ral?"

"Not I."

"I are free ter git then?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll git, as soon as I hev tuk ther wal-uables off o' Lanky, fer ther good o' his heirs, an' then I'm goin' straight back ter camp an' tell our Hyena Cap'n thet ther lamb eat ther wolf he sent to eat ther lamb."

"Oh, Doc, you is a howlin' terror, an' I loves yer fer ther git up an' git yer hes in yer, when it comes ter gunpowder music."

"Doc, don't let me detain yer, fer I'm off ter camp, an' I'll give ther coyotes a treat o' pickin' Lanky's bones, an' they'll find him a tough one."

"Don't speak ill of the dead, Dead Knife Jim, and I think, as he has been your comrade, although in crime, you owe it to him to bury him."

"Doc, I don't owe him nothin', an' as I hes but one hard, I hain't goin' ter make myself tired diggin' graves."

"Let ther wolves hev him, an' his bones will rest heur as ther monument o' a durned fool thet woke up ther wrong passenger."

"Good-night, Doc, unless yer wants ter stay an' see what Lanky hes got in his pockets."

With an expression of disgust, Frank Powell turned away, undressed his dummy, that had served him so well, and mounted his horse.

Then he said:

"Jim, I don't wish to have to shoot you some day, for I owe you a number of kindnesses I can never repay."

"Neither do I wish to see you hanged, richly as you deserve it, so take my advice, give up the sinful life you lead, and try and become honest."

"Doc, I hes ther thing under consideration, for I hes got a leetle dust laid up, enough ter fit me out in a snug ranch, an' I may turn honest afore yer knows it, an' take ter teachin' an Injun Sunday-school, fer them red-skins need convartin' bad."

"Good-night, Dead Knife, and carry out your idea, is my advice, for otherwise you'll hang yet."

"Good-night, Doc, an' luck ter yer, onless yer shoots at me," called out the strange man, as Frank Powell rode away at a rapid canter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SURGEON SOLDIER'S STARTLING TIDINGS.

BREVET-MAJOR BENTEN,* the handsome commandant of the dangerous outpost, where Frank Powell was chief surgeon, and his brother George the chief of scouts, sat in his cosey

* The hero of the Custer Massacre, and at present a distinguished officer of the U. S. Army.—THE AUTHOR.

quarters, engaged in conversation with several officers.

The lateness of the hour, for it was long after midnight, proved that the topic of conversation was one of importance.

The fact was that Night Hawk Powell, the scout, had arrived late that afternoon, accompanied by his brother, Broncho Bill, and Kirk Kendrick, the courier, the latter in disguise.

Kendrick had told his story, and then Night Hawk had his to tell of what he knew of the courier's adventure, and more.

He had told how he had, with his two brothers, invaded the Indian country and made some discoveries there that were of vast importance.

The coming in of Lieutenant Clark with a broken leg, the killing of a soldier, the attack on the stage-coach and death of the driver, with the capture and escape of the courier, all held deep weight with Major Benteen and his officers, for these acts showed how bold were the Red Angels, and how dangerous.

Then the news from the Indian country had its weight, and calling his officers together after the evening duties at the post were over, Major Benteen sat with them in council until the night had grown old.

Suddenly a tap came at the door.

"Come in," called out the major.

The door swung open and Frank Powell appeared.

"Ah, Powell, it is you; be seated, and there is a glass, while the decanter is before you," said the major, who, with the other officers present, seemed to be glad of the coming of the surgeon.

"Thank you, major, but I never drink, you know," said Frank Powell, taking the seat.

"Ah, yes; I always forget that; but then I am not to blame for it, as it is such a remarkable thing to see a man with brass buttons refuse a drink. I must be excused for my lack of memory.

"But, Powell, I am glad you have come, for we were trying to unravel a knot than which in comparison, the famed Gordian knot is not to be mentioned."

"The orderly told me, Major Benteen, that you had not retired, so I took the liberty of looking in on you."

"Delighted that you did; but where from?"

"The Monkton Ranch."

"Ah! I might have known that," said the major, with a smile, and Frank Powell blushed like a school-boy, while the officer continued:

"I hope you will not come to grief some night in your jaunts, Surgeon Powell."

"I nearly did so to-night, major," and Frank Powell told the story of his adventure.

All listened with surprise and interest, while Major Benteen said:

"Another feather in your scalp, Powell, to kill that fiend—"

"I hate to win feathers by taking life, major," was the quiet reply.

"True, but it was a game where it was your life or his; but I am sorry you let his comrade go."

"I could not do otherwise, major, for that is the man who warned Captain Burt of the Indian attack, and several times he has saved my life."

"True, and his friendship for you seems strange, when you broke his arm with your bullet and then amputated it for him."

"There is no accounting for friendships, sir, and, strange as it may seem, I have a real liking for that same Dead Knife Jim; but, to change the subject from myself, major, I suppose your courier, Kendrick, reported his strange adventures?"

"Yes, and it was remarkable how he escaped from Kit's Angels; but he owes it to you."

"And my brothers, sir; but did George tell you of our run into the Indian country?"

"He did, and said that you had a full report to make to me."

"I can soon tell you all, sir, and then what decision I have come to."

"You are willing to speak out before those present, Powell?"

"Yes, sir, certainly, though it is best to keep it secret from the soldiers and all others in the fort."

"I will do as you deem best, Powell, in the matter; but now let us hear what you have discovered on your trip to the Indian country."

"In the first place, sir, as you know, my brothers and myself went upon a hunt, with the intention to make any discoveries we could regarding the red-skins and the Red Angels."

"Yes, Powell, and although I knew you were going really for the pleasure of a hunt together, I did not doubt but that you would find news of importance of some kind, for you are as good a scout as you are a surgeon, and that is saying a great deal, while your brothers are not in the least your inferior as plainmen, and I do not wonder that men call you the Wizard Trio."

"But I keep back your story."

"Well, general, I made a discovery, and it was in this way.

"Will saw a red-skin peering out of a thicket and shot him."

"The report called George and myself to the spot, for we were in a dangerous position, and we found Will bemoaning the fact that he had shot a sick Indian."

"The red-skin was not dead, and Will was bending over him, trying to do what he could for him, as the red-skin had been hiding from us and not trying to shoot us."

"A glance showed me what was the matter with him, major."

"And what was that, Powell?"

"Small-pox."

The officers all started, and involuntarily they moved further off from the surgeon, who said, with a smile:

"Have no fear, gentlemen, for you may remember that my brothers and I have a secret camp in the hills, where we had a hidden stock of clothes, provisions, blankets and ammunition, and we went straight there, after leaving the Indian, and changed our attire throughout, besides we have all been vaccinated, and used every preventive in our power against contagion."

"I know you are careful, Powell, but then this is such a fearful disease," said the major.

"It is a fearful disease, major, and it is my wish to begin at once and vaccinate the entire garrison, from yourself down, for I only a few days ago supplied myself with a quantity of excellent vaccine matter."

"Begin at once, Powell, with me, as I rank all others," laughed the major, while he added:

"But tell us about your small-pox Indian first, while, permit me to say that I think your brother, Broncho Will, did the poor devil a favor to put him out of his misery."

"He certainly did, sir, for the red-skin was a loathsome sight, and, knowing that the disease was contagious, seemed to take a delight, while dying, in the thought that we would contract it from him and die, too."

"And did you see him die?"

"Oh, yes, sir, for I would not leave a dog to die alone."

"I sent George and Will on to our secret camp, and then had a talk with the red-skin in his own tongue."

"He told me that the villages of his people were being ravaged with the disease, hundreds being down with it, and hundreds dying, and that their medicine-men were unable to do them any good, while, to excuse themselves, these red-skin quack doctors told them that the Great Spirit was cursing them because they did not strike a severe blow against the whites."

"The Indian was partly delirious, and told me more than he intended to, for as I spoke in the Sioux tongue, I led him to believe that I was a comrade and friend."

"And you thereby made some important discovery, Powell?"

"Yes, Major Benteen, I made the discovery that the medicine-men were instigating an attack upon the settlements, ranches and this fort."

"The deuce they are!" cried the major.

"They certainly are planning such an attack, sir; and more, and are getting together what warriors they can, and are anxious to bring upon the whites not only fire and scalping-knife, but also the disease that is now a curse in their villages, for they will leave their dead unburied, allow their wounded to fall into the hands of the soldiers, and thus cunningly sow the seeds of a terrible epidemic along the border."

"My God, Powell, this is fearful!" cried Major Benteen, thoroughly alive to the possibilities of such a catastrophe, while the officers who were present gave vent to their amazement and horror in very strong language, for, though ready to meet any foe face to face with weapons, or to risk ambush, and torture if captured, brave as they were they shrunk from meeting a foe armed with the dread and loathsome disease of small-pox.

CHAPTER XVII.

A BRAVE MAN'S SACRIFICE.

THE tidings brought by the Surgeon Scout were certainly of a most fearful nature, for while it was terrible to feel that the poor Indians were scourged with a loathsome epidemic which their greatest medicine-men were powerless to check or contend with, the thought that it would spread from one village to another, and thus along the border through the white settlements and forts, was something that made the stoutest heart quail to contemplate.

After all had expressed their views upon the subject, Major Benteen turned to Surgeon Powell, who had sat in silence after his startling communication, and asked:

"Well, Doctor, what are we to do against this new enemy?"

"I believe that it can be successfully met, sir."

"Indeed! but how?"

"There is but one way."

"And that?"

"To check the epidemic."

"But, in Heaven's name, how?"

"Well, major, I have thought of a plan."

"Tell it to us, Powell, and if I can do aught in the matter to carry out your views, I will gladly do so."

"Well, major, from what I have gleaned from the dying Indian, I came to the conclusion that it would be fully a week before the warriors started upon their raid in this direction, for it is no easy matter for them to get the requisite force, with their braves dying as they are."

"And when do you expect them to start?"

"Within four days, Major Benteen, and perhaps in three from the present time."

"We have little time to lose, then."

"Not much time to throw away, sir, but I hope to arrive there in ample time to check them."

"You hope to arrive where?" asked the major, emphasizing every word.

"At the Indian camp, sir."

"At the what?"

"The Sioux village, major."

"I do not quite get your meaning, Powell."

"Let me make myself plain then, Major Benteen."

"I wish you would, for you hint that you are going among the Indians."

"I am going, sir, to the village that is suffering with the small-pox."

There was no mistaking these words.

They were uttered in the calm manner habitual to the Surgeon Soldier, and he meant just what he said.

"Great God! Powell, are you mad?"

"No, Major Benteen, I am sane."

"You cannot be."

Placing his fingers lightly upon his pulse, he answered:

"My pulse is normal, major; I feel in perfect health, and there is not the slightest symptom of insanity about me."

"My dear Powell, what can be your purpose in thus throwing your life away, and what good will it do?"

"Let me explain, major, my purpose."

"In the first place, I believe that I can go to the village camp and check the epidemic."

"They will kill you at sight."

"I must risk that."

"If the red-skins do not kill you, the small-pox will."

"I must take my chances on that, too, major."

"Powell, I well know your skill as a surgeon, but for a white man to go into a hostile Indian camp and expect to make it a hospital and reign as chief medicine-man, over their doctors, is preposterous!"

"It is at least worth the trial, major, and I shall, if successful, stop the spread of the scourge, and prevent the raid of the plague-haunted warriors upon the settlement."

"And this is why you go?"

"Yes."

"If you accomplish the one-half, you will do incalculable good."

"I am well aware of that, major."

"What do your brothers say of your plan?"

"They have both urged to accompany me; but I will not hear of it, as it would be a miracle if the three of us escaped."

"And you do not fear the plague?"

"A physician, my dear major, should know no more fear in the face of a dread disease than should a soldier in battle."

"Well answered, Powell; but, if there is to be a sacrifice, send the assistant surgeon of this post, for if he is lost, why then we can stand it."

All laughed at this remark, as they knew the surgeon's assistant was not popular with the commandant, he having reaped a little revenge against his superior on one occasion when the major was quite ill and Frank Powell absent, by dosing him with the vilest concoctions he could compound, and leading his wretched patient to believe his life depended upon his swallowing the numerous medicines.

"You have never forgiven Dorcas, major, I see," said Frank Powell with a smile.

"No, Powell, for I have always thought that he played it upon me to get even for my reproving him one day when I deemed that he richly deserved it—ugh! the thought of those medicines he gave me is enough to make me hate the entire fraternity."

"But you are no pill-mixer, Powell, and I wish you would oblige me by sending Dorcas on this dangerous mission you contemplate, and if he should be scalped, we could survive without him, and should he catch the small-pox, it certainly cannot destroy that which he has not—beauty."

The officers all laughed, for they knew the major's weakness about bad medicines, and Surgeon Dorcas was known as the ugliest man at the fort.

"No, major, I must leave Surgeon Dorcas to look after the health of you all during my absence, and—"

"Oh, I'll keep healthy, never fear, Powell, and my word for it, the entire sick-list will report for duty to-morrow, when it is known that you have left them to the tender mercies of Rufus Dorcas, M. D., Assistant Surgeon United States Army."

"But tell me, do you insist upon this Quixotic act?"

"I do, sir."

"And when do you start?"

"To-morrow, or rather to-day, for it is only a couple of hours to dawn."

"You cannot be persuaded from making this sacrifice?"

"It is my duty, major, and not a sacrifice."

"By the flag! but I have half a mind to order you not to go."

"No, Major Benteen, you are not the man to stand between me and what I deem to be my duty."

"It is no whim of mine, no seeking after notoriety, that I go; but from a stern sense of duty, in the belief that I can do good."

"I believe you, Powell, and if any man can accomplish the task you propose, you are that man."

"But you have to risk your life, invading the village of hostiles who thirst for your scalp, and, if the warriors receive you with confidence, you'll have their medicine-men to fight, while, if you escape these two evils, then comes the fear of contagion, and the thought that you may lie down to die among those you strive to serve."

"But go, Powell, and my prayers will follow you, and be it your fate to fall in doing the noble duty you set for yourself, then you will not be forgotten by those you leave behind you."

All were touched by the kindly-spoken words of the gallant major, and, grasping his hand, Frank Powell said in his quiet way:

"Major Benteen, I thank you, and, should fate go against me, please turn over to my brothers my papers and the money due me."

"Now, as I wish to get what rest I can, I will say good-by," and shaking hands with all present, Frank Powell left the major's quarters and sought his own, where he threw himself upon his cot and was soon sleeping soundly, wholly oblivious of the self-sacrifice he had determined to make.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WHAT THE FIRELIGHT REVEALED.

THE dying red-man whom Will Powell had shot had not exaggerated the state of affairs in his village, for the scourge was making wild havoc among his people.

The village was a large one, and its chief, Wolf Fang, was one of the most noted braves upon the border, and a bitter foe to all whites.

He had a powerful band of warriors at his back, when he brought them all into the field from the outlying camps, and he was feared by soldiers, settlers and outlaws alike.

A young chief, the son of Loud Thunder, a famous chieftain before him, he had partly inherited his position, and partly won it by his desperate deeds.

Anxious to gain still greater fame, he had led small bands of picked braves down into the white settlements, and committed his depredations almost within sight of the fort.

Several times he had been thwarted by Frank Powell, and also by his brothers, Night Hawk and Will, who had gained an inkling of his intended red work, and sent the warning from ranch to ranch.

On one occasion, Frank Powell, when a prisoner to the Red Angels, had saved them from Wolf Fang and his braves, and also beaten him off, aided by those same men of Captain Hyena's band, when they were attacking with a fair chance of success a military outfit from the fort, which they had besieged and were overwhelming with their superior numbers.

Under these circumstances, it will be seen that the Doctor Scout had become well known to the Sioux, and they hated him with the most intense hatred, and longed for his scalp.

They knew him well as the medicine-man of the pale-faces, and when wounded Indians had fallen into the hands of the soldiers, he had so skillfully dressed their wounds and restored them to health, that they had given him the names of the Wizard Doctor and Mighty Medicine, while he was also looked upon as a most mysterious being, who seemed bullet and arrow-proof, though knowing just where to send the deadly lead himself, when he wanted to kill a foe.

To get possession of the Doctor Scout, the Sioux would have contributed a finger each all around, and this Frank Powell well knew, and yet he calmly set out from the fort to carry out his desperate purpose.

The village of the Wolf Fang was most charmingly situated, in the midst of a fertile hill-land, where crystal streams glided through the valley, and bluffs protected it from the chilling winds of winter.

There was an abundance of grass and water for the stock, numerous canyons, vast quantities of wood, and game of all kinds within easy reach.

Like a panorama the tepee village lay before one glance of the eye, from one end of the valley, and here and there were huts built of bark, or poles, that were the chief's quarters, Council Lodges and Medicine Lodges.

At the time that the village is brought before

the view of the reader, there was a strange excitement, and yet a hush resting upon all.

It was just after sunset, and the light of day was fading away, leaving darkness in the valley.

Hurrying forms of half-grown children and squaws, were seen hastening to and fro in silence, and warriors stalked about here and there, and yet seemed to be making for one center, the grand Medicine Lodge of the village.

The tum-tum of the Indian drum rolled continuously from various tepees where sickness and death had visited, and scattered about were little groups, evidently belonging to one family, discussing some question of deep moment to them.

As I have said, it was a scene of excitement, and yet a feeling as though all loud demonstrations were to be suppressed.

At length a camp-fire was lighted in front of the Medicine Lodge, where the score of medicine-men were assembled under their leader, Death Killer, an old chief whose hair was white, but whose herculean frame was unbent by the years that had passed over him.

One strange thing about this old chief was that he possessed a beard, long and white.

He was dressed in the full teggery of a great chief, and carried in his hand a staff, with the skull of a white man at one end and a bunch of scalps, fully a score in number, and representing the hair of old age to childhood, for there were long white locks, evidently torn from the head of some old woman, and the silken blonde hair of the infant.

The face of the old medicine-chief was streaked with red, white, and black paint, and the hands had been died crimson, a sure sign that he meant war.

Such was Death Killer, the medicine-chief of the Sioux village I have attempted to describe, and the power he held was equal to that of Wolf Fang, and in fact he was more feared.

His followers in the medical fraternity were chips of the old block, and an ugly lot of scamps, as a glance would show.

When the camp-fire, a very grand affair, was lighted in front of the Medicine Lodge, these worthies were discovered seated in a line, their backs to the tepee, their heads drooped, and the old chief in the center.

With the lighting of the fire the battle-chiefs and warriors of the village began to move toward the Medicine Lodge, singly and in pairs.

Reaching the fire, they seated themselves in a semicircle around it, and facing the medicine-men, and those of higher rank forming the inner circle.

All was silence, not a word being spoken, and only the beating of the death-drums through the village broke the stillness.

Soon a tall form advanced and took the seat of honor, facing the medicine-chief, Death Killer.

This late comer was Wolf Fang, and a finer specimen of savage manhood could not be found.

He was as straight as a soldier, his shoulders broad, waist small, and being over six feet in height, he possessed a form that was full of strength and activity.

His leggings and moccasins were richly beaded, his head-dress of plumes of various colors was gorgeous, and his body was bare from the waist up, excepting the silver armlets he wore and the necklaces of bear-claws that encircled his neck, around which hung a fringe of scalps, two-score in number, and gory trophies that were his pride.

As Wolf Fang approached all but Death Killer arose until he took his seat, and then every eye was turned upon him.

His face was a strong one, but full of recklessness and sternness, and it was devoid of paint.

For some moments after his arrival a silence followed, and then the old medicine-chief spoke in a low, deep voice, addressing Wolf Fang:

"Has the great battle-chief of our people opened his ears to the words of the Death Killer and his medicine-men?" he asked.

"The ears of the Wolf Fang are ever open to hear that which is good for his people," was the reply.

"The Death Killer and his medicine-men have looked among the braves of the tribe, and find half a thousand warriors, as the pale-faces count them, who can go upon the war-path with the coming of dawn."

"Will the Wolf Fang lead them?"

"The Wolf Fang will lead his braves to battle; but the Wolf Fang's people are sick; they fall as the leaves fall, and the Death Killer and his medicine-men do not save them."

The braves, the women and children all die, and the sickness seizes upon more and drags them down."

"The Wolf Fang would not fly from his people in their sorrow, he would not lead a band of sick warriors to stagger upon the war-path and be cut down by the pale-faces, but he would remain here to nurse them back to health, and then, with strong feet and arms, to have his braves go and fight our white foes."

"The Wolf Fang has spoken; he has told his wishes; but if the great medicine-chief, Death Killer, says that the Great Spirit will not make our people well unless we go, sick, worn out, and

with unhappy hearts upon the war-path, then Wolf Fang will lead his warriors, if it be to death only."

The young chief had begun to speak in a low tone, and while seated; but after a few words he arose to his feet, and what he said fell with telling force upon his braves, who simply sided with the views of the old medicine-chief from fear of the mysterious powers he held.

But Death Killer was not to be put off.

He saw that the scourge was seizing fresh victims hourly, and his medicines were of no use to stay the dread disease.

Could he get Wolf Fang and his five hundred braves off for a couple of weeks, he would remove all the well to the hills, let the sick die, and thus try to arrest the epidemic.

If he could not do this his power was gone.

And more, he had hopes that the warriors would return victorious, and thus show that he was right in sending them.

Seeing that Wolf Fang would go if he said it was right to please the Great Spirit, the cunning old medicine-chief arose to his feet, and said in solemn tones:

"The Great Spirit demands that the blood of the pale-faces be shed."

"The Wolf Fang must lead his warriors to battle, and death will fly from our village in fright."

Then silence fell upon all, broken by a cry from a hundred lips, as suddenly, upon the hill-top, flashed up a bright flame.

It was in full view of the village, and upon the trail leading down to the Medicine Lodge.

There, in the full glare of the fire, which had so suddenly flared up, sat a horseman.

Horse and rider were motionless, and the latter had his hands raised above his head, the palms turned toward the Indians, as a token of peace.

"The mighty medicine-man of the pale-faces!" cried a number of warriors, recognizing the horseman by the bright glare of the fire, and one and all sprung to their feet in dire alarm.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "MIGHTY MEDICINE" OF THE PALE-FACES.

THE warriors who sat around the Medicine Lodge council-fire discovered several things at a glance.

First, they beheld the Mighty Medicine of the pale-faces, seated calmly upon his horse, his arms raised above his head, as though he had come to them upon a mission of peace.

The camp-fire revealed him distinctly, for he was not very far distant.

Next, they saw that the camp-fire had been quietly built under cover of the darkness, and then lighted suddenly, and it had flared up as though some inflammable substance had been poured upon the wood.

These discoveries brought all to their feet, for, knowing the Wizard Doctor well, they felt that at his back he must have a number of his white soldiers, come to attack their plague-ridden village.

But, a second look showed that the horseman appeared not only to be unaccompanied, but was coming alone to their village.

At a word from his master, the noble animal which the white man bestrode, moved slowly down the trail toward the Indian village.

Upon his back, upright and calm, and with his hands raised above his head, as when first discovered, Frank Powell sat, coming to dare Indian fury and treachery.

Out of the glare of the firelight he rode, and stepping away from their lodge-fire, the warriors shaded their eyes and traced his way through the darkness.

All looked to the Wolf Fang for orders, but his lips moved not, and then old Death Killer spoke:

"Let the young braves meet and seize their white foe, and drag him here for us to look upon," he said.

At his words, a dozen warriors bounded away, but a loud call from Wolf Fang brought them back.

"Do my braves fear one man, when he comes alone to our village?"

"Let my warriors wait, for the great medicine-chief of the pale-faces comes with his hands empty, and places himself in our power."

This seemed true, as far as the braves had discovered, and they waited in patience, though all saw that old Death Killer had hoped the white man would have been killed by some of them, and not be brought alive into their midst.

The eyes of the entire village were now upon the daring pale-face, who came alone into the midst of his enemies.

They saw him coming like a shadowy phantom through the darkness, and watched him ride slowly up to the Council Lodge and dismount.

Leaving his horse standing untied, with uplifted hands he calmly advanced, the warriors giving way before him and closing in behind him, their hands grasping their knives.

Straight up to Wolf Fang he walked, and halting before him, folded his arms, and stood

thus in easy, graceful posture, while he said, in his softest tones:

"The medicine-man of the pale-faces has come to Wolf Fang and to his people, to drive death from their tepees, to save their braves, their women and children, and to bring back laughter to their hearts where now are only wails of sorrow.

"Will the Wolf Fang and his warriors let the medicine-chief of the pale-faces prove that his tongue is straight, that he will do as he says, or will they kill him and start on their war-trail against their white foes, leaving death in their village, to meet death on the prairies, and if any come back, to find graves to mark where lie their people, dead because their medicine-men are fools and know not how to kill the sickness that is destroying this Sioux tribe?

"The white chief has spoken, and he is ready to heal his red-skin foes, or to die by their hands.

"Let the Wolf Fang speak."

Not a sound other than the crackling of the burning wood was heard during the words of Frank Powell.

What he said fell upon them like a voice from the happy hunting-grounds.

They were dazed by his boldness, amazed by his claim to cure them, and astounded that he knew of their intended raid upon the settlements and ranches.

He had come alone into their midst, which showed that he did not fear them.

He knew of the plague upon them, and yet came to face it and cure them.

He called their great medicine-men fools, and told them that he was ready to die, if so they willed.

All eyes turned upon Wolf Fang and then upon old Death Killer.

The latter chief was nervous and grasped his knife convulsively, while his medicine-men did the same.

As for Wolf Fang he had folded his arms upon his broad breast, and stood as did his white foe, calm and unmoved.

This was one sign that he meant no hostility toward him just then.

Having spoken, the Surgeon Scout stood in silence, as patient as an Indian, awaiting the result.

"Will the great chief, Wolf Fang, hurl words into the face of the white dog, or shall Death Killer speak?" suddenly cried the old medicine-chief, too excited to longer remain silent.

"The Wolf Fang has a tongue.

"He does not sit like a child in council when there are words to be said.

"He has heard the words of the mighty medicine-man of the pale-faces and he will reply to him, and the Death Killer will remain silent when the battle-chief talks."

These words fell like a thunderbolt upon all, for they showed that the Wolf Fang would allow no interference, even from the Death Killer, and that he was impressed by what the pale-face medicine-man had said.

Then again fell a silence upon all, and the eyes of the warriors rested on the unmoved face of Frank Powell with an admiration at his courage which they could not hide.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CHIEF'S PLEDGE.

AFTER another silence, always impressive in an Indian council, Wolf Fang again turned to Surgeon Powell and asked:

"Is not the great white medicine-man the foe of the red-man?"

"The medicine-chief of the pale-faces is the red-man's foe, when the warrior faces him with arms in his hands to kill him.

"But when the red-men are sick and in sorrow, when their people are falling like the leaves from the trees in autumn, then the white medicine-chief is their friend," was the answer, Powell, as before, speaking in the Sioux tongue, which he had mastered perfectly.

"And what says the white medicine-chief he can do for my people?"

"He can drive sickness and death from their village, if they will do as he commands them."

"Does he say that he can do that which the great Death Killer, the medicine-chief of the Sioux, cannot do?"

"Yes."

"The Death Killer is the greatest of medicine-men."

"The Death Killer is an old fool," was the contemptuous reply of Powell, and the Indians fairly started at his bold words, fearing the old medicine-man as they did.

"No, the Death Killer is a great medicine-man—his head is right—his tongue is straight," said Wolf Fang, not liking to bear a man whom he had regarded as great called a fool.

"Then why does not the Death Killer save his people?"

"Why does he not drive the plague from among them?"

"Why does he not cure the sick, instead of sending the Wolf Fang and his brave warriors off to fight the pale-faces, when he knows that they will be cut to pieces, sick and wretched as they are?"

"No, the Death Killer has no power to cure his people, and the white medicine-man has."

These bold words were listened to with amazement, and furtive glances were cast at the man thus denounced, and who had held the Sioux under a kind of holy terrorism for years.

The questions were unanswerable, and Wolf Fang, impressed by them, asked:

"Does the white chief say that he can save my people?"

"Yes," came the unhesitating response.

"How?"

"He has his art of healing that saves the pale-faces, and he will save the red-men, too.

"Let the Wolf Fang ask those of his warriors who have been wounded and in the hands of the white medicine-chief, if he did not cure them?"

There was no need of asking this question, for the braves, who had fallen wounded into the hands of the soldiers and owed their lives to Frank Powell, had already testified to his wonderful skill, and also kindness.

One had had an arm amputated, another a leg, one had had a bullet extracted from his body, and a fourth a broken head made whole, so that the white surgeon's skill had astounded them, and had formed the theme of conversation round many a camp-fire.

Now this same man, their bitter foe, and yet one who had befriended them, fearlessly came into their village, when the plague was ravaging it, showed that he knew of their intended raid upon the ranches, called their medicine-men fools, and asserted his power to be able to cure the sick, and stop the dread disease.

It was marvelous, and the Indians were completely shaken out of their equanimity by the bold words of the white medicine-man.

"What has the Death Killer to say?"

"He has heard the words of the great medicine-man of the pale-faces," and Wolf Fang turned to the old chief, who looked as though he was about to blow up with fury.

But curbing an outburst, he said, while his voice quivered:

"The white medicine-man is a lying dog of a pale-face.

"His words are not straight, his tongue is crooked.

"He has come as a spy to our village, and talks, while he looks, so that his warriors can come in and kill us while our people are sick and dying."

This seemed a new way of accounting for the visit of Frank Powell, and it had its weight at once, as the Doctor Scout saw.

But he was quick to check the tide against him by saying:

"The white chief has come alone, and he faces the sickness that kills your people, and confronts your warriors in their anger.

"He is here to prove that his tongue is not crooked, that his words are not a lie, and he will begin his work at once to save his Sioux brothers.

"If he fails, they have him here to torture him to death and to place his scalp on the lodge-pole of the Death Killer, their great medicine-chief.

"Will the Sioux warriors believe the words of the white medicine-chief?"

"No; the white dog shall—"

But Wolf Fang sprung before the infuriated old medicine-chief, and clutched him in his firm grasp, while he said sternly:

"The Wolf Fang is chief here.

"Let the Death-Killer not anger him."

Again a silence fell upon all, while the old medicine-chief turned and walked moodily into the lodge, followed by his medicine-men, who, with him, were wild with rage at the words of the white man.

Then Wolf Fang spoke, and all listened with deepest attention to every word that fell from his lips.

He said:

"The Wizard Medicine-man is a great chief, and he is a mighty doctor.

"If his heart is black, his face does not show it.

"If his words are false, his eyes look true.

"He says what he can do.

"If he does what his words say, the Wolf Fang will let him go free, and place upon his shoulders the robe of White Beaver.

"If he speak crooked, the Wolf Fang will give him into the hands of the Death Killer and his medicine-men to torture."

"I accept the pledge of the Wolf Fang; but he must help me to heal his people."

"The Wolf Fang will do as the white medicine-chief asks.

"Do my warriors say that their chief has spoken well?" and he turned to the braves about him.

A general grunt of assent followed, and then Frank Powell became the self-installed medicine-man of the Indian village, with death by torture staring him in the face if he failed to make his words good.

CHAPTER XXI.

BATTLING WITH DEATH.

FRANK POWELL was born with more nerve than generally falls to the lot of man.

In fact it seems to be a characteristic of his race, as his brothers also are cool in the deadliest danger, and never "lose their heads," so to speak, no matter what the odds against them, or the work they have to perform.

It was their nature to surmount all difficulties, to shirk nothing that they had to face; and their early training amid desperate peril, requiring promptness of action, a steady hand and perfect nerve, made them the skillful surgeons and men of medicine they are to-day; for theirs was a severe schooling to grow up in, though it brought forth good fruit in after years.

It will therefore not be wondered at that Surgeon Powell went to work in the Indian camp with promptness, decision and a determination to get at the root of the evil and take the plague by the throat, as it were.

He knew that failure was death, and yet this knowledge did not make him nervous.

His first duty was to at once ask Wolf Fang to select for him the best nurses he had in the village, young or old, and of either sex.

This being done, for Wolf Fang seemed to be inspired with the belief that the Wizard Doctor knew what he was about, Frank Powell set off on a tour of the village.

To his amazement, he found the situation far worse than he could have believed, and the dread plague was seizing upon new victims almost hourly.

Having made this discovery, he decided to first strive to check the spread of the evil.

But to do this he must vaccinate, and he expected trouble at once where he had to do this with a red-skin.

He had brought with him a large case of medicines, as well as a quantity of excellent virus and all that he felt he would need, and he quickly arranged them in a tepee which the young chief assigned him.

He was tired with his long ride and loss of sleep, but he would sacrifice self to begin the good work at once.

To Wolf Fang and others of the more intelligent among the Indians, he explained as well as he could, to their untutored minds, the uses of vaccination as a preventive against catching small pox, and the young chief promptly stepped forward and bared his brawny arm for the surgeon to work on.

This was half the battle, and Powell smiled at his success.

But there were rumors going around that the white medicine-man was putting poison in their veins, to kill them all, and this at once checked the coming of the patients.

Dark looks and grumblings were heard upon all sides, and a storm was brewing, when Frank Powell at once bared his own arm and performed the operation on himself, while he said, quietly:

"See, if my red brothers die, I will die with them."

This at once reassured the Indians, and again the stream of red humanity flowed toward the Mecca of hope.

And on they came, through the hours of the night, the white man seated in his tepee, by a rude table, a rushlight burning brightly within, a large camp-fire without, while the stream marched in and flowed out.

Old warriors on crutches, old squaws with sticks, braves in the full vigor of manhood, maidens in the perfect flush of youth; then mothers with babes, and children by scores, trooping along in superstitious awe of the great white medicine-man who had daringly come into their village, to drive death out, and befriend his bitterest foes.

All night long the crowd poured in, until, at last all who could walk had gone through the, to them, yes, and to many white people, too, the weird performance that must save their lives.

What it meant they could not tell, but their chief trusted, while their own medicine-men hung back, sneered, and in grim silence looked on.

When the red villagers had been gone through with, excepting the medicine-men, Frank Powell turned to them.

His skilled eye read in the faces of several that they had already contracted the disease, and would soon be down with it, and he determined to make a point of this, and of others he had noticed also afflicted.

"Will my brother medicine-men let the white chief keep them from death?" he asked, turning alike to Death Killer and the others who stood near.

The Death Killer gave a contemptuous grunt and turned away, while his followers also showed contempt for the white chief.

"So be it; the white chief has spoken and you refuse."

Then, fixing his eyes upon those whom he knew to be already suffering, the Surgeon Scout continued:

"You will be sick soon, and you, and you, and you," and thus he pointed out those among the medicine-men, and the crowd, who would be victims.

His words sent an awe through the hearts of all; but unheeding this, the daring white man

began his work on those already down and suffering.

Under the instruction of the Surgeon Scout, the village was soon made as clean as possible, while new tepees were pitched further up the valley, and the well people all moved there, leaving their traps, old robes, and all disease-contaminated material, to be burned.

Many of the Indians clung desperately to their blankets; but the Doctor was not to be moved, and Wolf Fang, with perfect confidence in him, came to his rescue in all cases and carried the point in his favor.

Those warriors who had been under Powell's care when wounded were great aids to him, for they had seen the workings of an army hospital and knew that the medicine-man of the pale-faces was obeyed to the letter.

Day and night the indefatigable man worked, giving medicines, nursing, and doing all in his power to check the spread of the disease, as well as to cure those who were sick.

Under this rigid work the good result began to show itself at once, almost, and the second day very few deaths occurred, while in the upper village, where the well had been removed, only a case or two had broken out, and these, with their blankets and robes, had been hustled off to the hospital village, as the Doctor called the lower camp.

In the point of work, no man ever undertook a greater thing to accomplish, and as for daring and nobleness of heart, the deeds remains unsurpassed.

Untiring, snatching a nap here and there, Frank Powell continued on in the good work, and soon his Indian nurses became skilled in his mode of treatment, and did much to help along in the good cause of curing the sick, and preventing the spread of the plague.

When one after the other of the medicine-men were taken down, and the very ones whom the "Mighty Medicine-man"—as the Indians now called Powell—had pointed out, he was first at their side doing all in his power for them; nor were they averse to his services, while several others even submitted to being vaccinated by him, though old Death Killer and two or three of the older ones still held out.

Through the scourge thus far the medicine-men had miraculously escaped contagion; but when at last half their number got down with the dread ailment, it broke down the lingering hope of a number of the Indians who still clung to them in preference to the white man, and they acknowledged "Mighty Medicine" the King of Death.

Thus days passed away and death no longer stalked through the Indian village with his destroyed scythe.

The little parties that were often seen going up into the hills with their dead kindred were rarely seen now, and the invalids were getting well, where, under their native medicine men, one who was taken sick invariably died soon after.

Many who had been vaccinated remained in perfect health, and the wailing of squaws and crying of children came to an end.

At length no new cases occurred, and Frank Powell felt that the end of his labors had come, and his heart told him that he had nobly done his duty to those who were his foes, and also to his own race, for his brave act had kept back the plague-cursed warriors from rushing down upon the settlements and ranches to spread death, ruin and disease among the pale-faces.

With this thought he sunk to sleep one night, determined upon the morrow to demand of Wolf Fang the keeping of the pledge he had made him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE "WHITE BEAVER."

WOLF FANG came to the tepee of the "Mighty Medicine," the very morning following, and just as Frank Powell was thinking of looking up that individual to have a chat with him.

He knew that the young chief was friendly to him, and appreciated all he had done, and had reproved a number of his people for believing that none of the sick should die after the white doctor had given his promise to check the epidemic.

Wolf Fang was no fool, but possessed good common sense, and, though a superstitious Indian, he did not expect miracles, and was not disappointed.

He had observed the acts of the Doctor Scout closely, and observed that the death rate decreased ten per cent. the first few days and fifty per cent. before the week was out, while those who fell ill after the coming of the white man were even of a smaller percentage.

He also observed that many of the very sick got well, a thing that had not occurred in a single case under his own medicine-men.

Seeing all this, he realized that the Surgeon Scout had saved the lives of hundreds of his people, many of them his best warriors, and the visit to his tepee was to so tell him, and prove his appreciation thereof.

With the chief came all the several chiefs of the tribe, all in their full war-bonnets and attire, mounted upon their best ponies, also in

gorgeous trappings, and followed by one hundred picked warriors.

Then there were four maidens, radiant in buckskin attire, and they represented the four moons* of the year.

The maidens were supposed to be beautiful and were according to red-skin taste, though two of them were pitted with small-pox, and the one representing the spring moon had her dress and head-gear worked in green beads, emerald-stained quills, and feathers dyed the same hue, to denote the budding forth of the leaves and grass.

The summer moon was represented by a maiden decorated in red, to indicate the warmth of the sun, and the fall moon had yellow decorations, while white beads, and white robe and feathers showed the snow, or winter moon.

These four maidens advanced ahead of the warriors, and behind the chiefs, and they carried between them, each one holding a corner, a large white robe, upon which some furry object was lying.

Arriving at the tepee, the Surgeon Scout came out, and gazed with surprise at the sight.

The chiefs, some twenty in number, divided in two lines, facing inward, and the warriors, a hundred strong, formed a semicircle around them, the maidens meanwhile walking up the lane made by the great braves.

Wolf Fang had now dismounted and stepped in front of Surgeon Powell, the maidens close at his heels.

"Well, chief, you are out in force.

"Is it my scalp you are after; do you want me to vaccinate you over again, or have you all been taken suddenly with the small-pox?" coolly said Doctor Powell, not at first grasping the situation.

Wolf Fang was a terror, that is certain.

He had a heart for his people, and hatred for all others.

He was unmerciful to a foe, a butcher of women and children, if his enemies, and was as cunning as a fox, savage as a tiger, as vicious as a snake and revengeful as an Italian.

Still he admired pluck even in a foe.

He would have been delighted to torture Frank Powell to death, and laughed to hear his groans of anguish.

But he had it in him to honor high courage, and to prove his appreciation of a service done him or his people.

He owed Frank Powell bitter grudges, and knew that several of his warriors had bitten the dust at the crack of the surgeon's rifle or revolver.

But he owed him a debt he could not regard too highly, in what he had done for him and his people, and he had come to pay it.

Stepping forward with the majestic dignity natural to him, and looking every inch the savage king he was, he said in his deep voice:

"The Mighty Medicine will listen to the words of the Wolf Fang."

"Yes; let my red brother speak, for the ears of Mighty Medicine are open," answered the Surgeon Scout.

"The Mighty Medicine is a great chief, though his blood is white, and the blood of Wolf Fang and his people is red," and the chief paused, as though to give Powell time to digest the idea of having white blood, which however doubtful a compliment, upon the principle of a coward being "white-livered," was meant as a praise by Wolf Fang.

"The Mighty Medicine has long been the foe of the Wolf Fang and his people, and my warriors have longed to have his scalp upon our lodge-poles.

"But he dared to come to our village, dared to face death when we were in sorrow, when the Great Spirit had turned his face from us in anger, when our medicine-men were like children in the fight against the foe that was destroying us.

"Yes; the Mighty Medicine of the pale-faces came to us, and he cared for us, healed us in our sickness, laughed at our medicine-men as fools, and sent Death, the Destroyer, from our village.

"The Mighty Medicine has done this, he has shown us that his words were not crooked, and he has not spoken with a slit tongue, and the people of the Wolf Fang respect him for what he has done."

"I did my duty, Wolf Fang, and knowing that pleases me more than all this palaver and pow-wow.

"But speak your little piece, even if you scalp me when you have ended it," bluntly said the surgeon, annoyed at all this praise, when he was expecting a stab in the back, for he was aware that he was hated by those he had served.

The Wolf Fang did not master the words of the white man exactly, and went on in his oratorical way:

"The Mighty Medicine must know that among our people only the greatest chiefs can wear the robe of the white beaver's skins!"

"It is allowed to no chief who has not reached

*Spring, summer, autumn and winter moons, as the year is divided by many Indian tribes.—THE AUTHOR.

his half a hundred years, or slain that many foes in battle.

"The Wolf Fang does not yet have power to wear it, though his father, the great chief Rolling Thunder, wore it, and left it for his son to wear.

"See, there is the white-beaver robe.

"It was made by the four chiefs' daughters who bear it, and it has twelve skins in it, and on each one is written, in the Indian sign language, the story of the lives of the twelve greatest chiefs of our people.

"Here, too, is the white-beaver bonnet belonging to the robe, with a necklace of grizzly-bear claws, and the plumes of the eagle of the mountains.

"To the Mighty Medicine the Wolf Fang gives these, because he is a great chief, and has saved the lives of our people.

"To the Mighty Medicine the Wolf Fang also gives the name of the 'White Beaver,' and with all the red-men of the plains the name is as sacred as the Pipe of Peace made of the clay that covers the bones of our fathers.

"The Wolf Fang has spoken, and the White Beaver is free to go his way, for no arrow of our people will be turned upon him, no warrior of our tribe will strike his trail until he has gone to his people.

"Then, if the White Beaver unburies the hatchet, he will again be the foe of Wolf Fang and his warriors.

"Let the Wolf Fang cover the White Beaver with the sacred robe and bonnet."

Frank Powell bent his head, more deeply touched than he cared to admit, and the young chief placed upon his head the really handsome piece of work, while the four maidens threw over his broad shoulders the robe of white beaver-skins, a furry mantle that a king might envy him, with its reverse side well dressed, full of strange hieroglyphics, in gaudy colors, and telling the stories—biographies—of the lives of the noted chief of the tribe, and pretty sinful stories, too, with killing and scalping the marked deeds of heroism.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FIGHT BY PROXY.

THE duty that called him to the Indian village being ended, Frank Powell was anxious to get away.

It was his intention to return to the secret retreat where, on his way he had left his clothing, and there destroy every vestige of what he had worn in the Indian camp, and after fumigating all else, and remaining until he was assured all danger of contagion was over, to go back to the fort, of course taking the trail that led him via the Monkton Ranch, to relieve Janette's mind about him.

Not a word had he heard of what was going on at the fort and ranches since his going to Wolf Fang's village, for no Indian scouts had been sent out, and he had discouraged the idea of sending them by saying that they might be taken ill and die alone on the prairie.

Having made all his arrangements to leave, and been presented by Wolf Fang with the best horse of his herd, to act as a pack-animal for his robes and provisions, he bade farewell to the red-skins and rode out of camp one morning at sunrise.

The Indians were quiet, thankful for what he had done, and glad to see him go, and Wolf Fang alone had grasped his hand at parting and said, earnestly:

"The White Beaver will not be forgotten."

Now Frank Powell was a perfect student of human nature, and nothing escaped his keen eyes, and he knew, as he departed from the village, that the end had not yet come.

He had seen a forced friendship shown him, and he was not deceived by it.

He had restored to health the medicine-men who were ill, but had not gained their friendship thereby, but rather their envy at his knowledge, and hatred that he had done what they could not do.

Old Death Killer had a strong following he knew, and they were of the most unruly members of the band.

Watching Death Killer closely, though not appearing to do so, he had observed that the old rascal was engaged in some plot against him.

What that plot was he could not fathom, but he rode out of the village convinced that he would soon know.

He took the straight trail back, disdaining to go out of his way to avoid danger, and his every sense was on the *qui vive* to meet what might face him.

He had brought his repeating-rifle with him, and his revolvers, while his belt of ammunition he had never parted from for an instant, so he knew that had not been tampered with.

The loads in his rifle and revolvers he could not vouch for on that score, and he took the first chance to halt and unload them, putting in fresh.

*This robe is still in the possession of Doctor Powell, and the most highly-prized of all of his rare collection of border relics and souvenirs. The white beaver war-bonnet the Doctor cut up to make bandages for wounded soldiers, when nothing else was at hand.

Then he rode on with more confidence.

He had gotten some miles from the camp when he saw that he had to pass through a canyon, narrow, long, and with precipitous wallsides, along the base of which grew stunted trees that would readily hide a hundred Indians.

On the watch he rode into the canyon, to suddenly see step out before him none other than the old Death Killer himself.

The medicine-man made no hostile demonstrations, and Frank Powell did not raise his rifle, but came to a halt, with a quick glance over his shoulder, as though he expected to see red-skins behind him.

"What does the Death Killer want, in standing in the path of the White Beaver?" said Powell, calling himself by his Indian name in a spirit of mischief, as he felt that it would hurt the old Indian's pride.

"The pale-face dog has said that the Death Killer, the great medicine-chief of his tribe, is a fool," savagely answered Death Killer.

"And it hit you hard, old man, to tell the truth about you," was the off-hand reply.

"The white man is a coward," hissed the Indian.

"We say in English, old man, that the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, and you can prove your words by meeting me, though I do hate to fire on a white head."

"Will the pale-face fight?"

"Just try me on and see if I don't fit, though I may be a trifle large for you," was the quaint reply.

"The Death-Killer buried his weapon long moons ago; he is a medicine-man, not a warrior, though the time was when he took pale-face scalps by the dozen."

"Four dozen and two would have gotten you a white beaver robe, such as is on my horse there."

"Why didn't you strike for that number?"

"The white man talks like a fool."

"Then get out of my way and let me pass on, if I fail to entertain you."

"The pale-face said he would fight."

"I'd rather not; and especially have to strike one who is as feeble as a squaw; but a wounded buffalo is dangerous, and I'll not let even your white hairs bar my way, so move on, old man."

"Will the white-face dog fight like the brave he claims to be?" almost shrieked the old Indian.

"Say, old man, I really wish you had died with the small-pox; but it wouldn't take to your old hide, though if it had, it would have been a blessing for your tribe."

"Now move, or I'll ride over you."

"The pale-face is a coward, for he refuses to fight!" again shrieked the old sinner.

"Show me something I can get a grip on, and I'll undeceive you, you heathen herb-crusher."

"The Tiger Killer will meet the white medicine-man," said a hoarse voice, and from the thicket stepped out a brave whom Frank Powell had often seen in the camp and admired for his grand physique.

He was almost a giant, with broad shoulders, heavy hips, and arms that were huge and muscular.

In the village he was feared by all for his ungovernable rage and great strength, though to Wolf Fang and old Death Killer he was most respectful, thus keeping himself out of trouble.

He had never spoken to the Surgeon, Scout, though addressed by him several times, and seemed to hate him with all the venom of his nature.

Upon seeing him Frank Powell did not change color, but said in his dry way, speaking to the old chief:

"You better keep that fellow as a specimen of what you can raise, and not get him killed."

"Does the white man say that he can kill the Tiger Killer?"

"I can make a pretty strong try of it, old man."

"Will he fight the big warrior?"

"Does he stand up for you, old man?"

"The Tiger Killer will fight for the Death Killer," was the answer.

"Then consider yourself killed by proxy, old gentleman," and Frank Powell coolly dismounted, while he asked:

"How does the big Injun want to fight?"

The huge warrior stepped forward, a knife in hand, and his eyes gleaming wickedly, for, afraid of the surgeon's revolvers, he thought if he could get him to fight with knives, once he got him in his powerful grasp, he could crush him.

"I'm well used to knives, old man, from a dissecting-knife to a bowie, so you better get your little friend to try some other weapon."

"The Tiger Killer fights with his knife," was the stern reply of the large warrior.

"All right, let me get my Arkansas toothpick out," and drawing his bowie, he rubbed the edge gently across his hand, and continued:

"I'll stand with my back here, against this high bank, where no trees grow, so that I can see that there will be no funny business going on behind me."

"Now, Death Killer, if I kill you by proxy, how many more braves have you got lying in wait to fight me?"

"The white man can go if he kills the Tiger."

"I shall certainly not ask permission of you, and I warn you I'll shoot at sight if any other Indians appear."

"The white man must lay his weapons down, as the Tiger Killer does, at the feet of the Death Killer."

"You labor under a strange hallucination if you think so, old man, for I shall keep my weapons—see, I place my horses here, and I take my stand here. Unchain your tiger and set him on me."

The Death Killer was disappointed, as was also the Tiger, and they showed it in their faces; but their desire to kill the white man, and belief that he was no match for the adversary he was to face, made them consent that their foe should have his own way at the start.

As Powell bared his wrist for the fight, the Tiger Killer with a wild yell sprung upon him without other warning.

What occurred was done so rapidly that the old medicine-chief did not understand it all, for in a second's time it seemed to him, he beheld his giant defender dying on the ground, a knife thrust in his heart, and the Surgeon Scout in his saddle, a revolver in each hand, about to ride on his way.

In frenzied rage he shouted:

"Let my braves take the white dog alive for torture!"

"Ha! as I expected," cried Powell, and his revolver flashed as a young medicine-man, one he had cured when sick, sprung into view.

At the crack of the weapon the medicine-man went to grass; but a score appeared in his place, and Frank Powell knew that he had a desperate tragedy to play in.

But, ere he could fire a second shot, suddenly the rattle of revolvers was heard from above, and old Death Killer was claimed by his namesake, sinking down without a word, while other warriors felt the stinging bullets that came from unseen foes, and in mad dismay they bounded up the canyon, just as Frank Powell dropped from his horse and lay in a heap upon the ground.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A TRIO ON A TRAIL.

To say that the daring act of Frank Powell, the post surgeon, created a sensation when it leaked out where he had gone and for what purpose, would be to draw it mildly.

Paul Monkton, as the old ranchero's nephew, consented to be called at his uncle's request, visited the fort, and there heard of the surgeon's mission.

On his way back to the ranch he stopped over night at his uncle's, and made known what the Surgeon Scout had done.

Of course it deeply distressed both the major and Janette, and cast a gloom upon the little household, for, outside of the fear that the Doctor would be killed by the Indians, was the dread of his falling a victim to the dreaded plague, should he escape the first-named danger.

As the days passed on at the fort, and the Indians did not come upon their expected raid, Major Benteen felt assured that Frank Powell had safely entered their village, though what might follow no one could guess.

One day Night Hawk Powell went to the major and asked permission to go off on a scout.

"Do you go alone, Powell?"

"No, sir, my brother Will accompanies me."

"He is here, then?"

"Yes, sir, he came up from the ranch this morning, and as our mother is most anxious about Frank, we concluded to look him up, as we did when he was the prisoner of the Red Angels."

"And I hope with equal success as then; but you are at liberty to take other scouts, and, if you like, Captain Burt will go with you with a couple of companies."

"Thank you, Major Benteen, but it would not be wise, for they might contract the disease that is now ravaging the Indian camps, and a small force would do no good, while a large force cannot be had."

"Will and myself will go alone, and see what is the exact situation of affairs."

"Well, Powell, I am glad to have you go, for I have wanted to know, but would not ask you to take such a risk while your brother's fate was unknown."

"When will you start?"

"Within the hour, sir, and I will stop at Monkton Ranch for supper, and breakfast with the major's nephew, so if there is any mail for the ranches we will carry it."

"No, there is nothing; but good-by, and luck go with you."

That evening Major Monkton had the two brothers to supper with him, and Paul Monkton was also present, and knowing their mission insisted on accompanying them.

Night Hawk, under the circumstances, could raise no objection, and Broncho Bill whispered:

"Frank says that he has a world of pluck, and is a perfect plainsman, so I say yes."

"All right, Mr. Monkton, we would be glad to have you go; but the danger will be great."

"That I do not care for, and, if you say so, ride over with me to-night, and we will get a sunrise start from my ranch in the morning," said the young and handsome ranchero.

This plan was decided upon, and with best wishes from the major and Janette, the three men departed upon their dangerous errand, to invade the Indian country.

Acquainted with every foot of the way, Night Hawk acted as guide, after leaving the young ranchero's home, just as the sun arose the following morning.

They were all mounted on their best horses, carried an extra animal with stores and ammunition, and an animal trained to follow and keep well up with his mounted companions.

Going cautiously they at last struck the hill country, and then camped, watching their own trail to see if they had been seen and were being followed.

But they saw no signs of red-skins about, and once more started on their way, penetrating surely but slowly into the dangerous Indian country, and at a pace that would not fatigue their horses, so that they would not be ready when called on to go.

In this progress several days passed, and still no signs of red-skins about were discovered.

"It is very evident that there is great trouble in the Indian village, or they would be scouting and hunting through here in numbers," said Broncho Bill.

"Yes, there's something up there; but we'll hunt a secure hiding-place, go into camp, and then I'll scout closer to the village on foot, leaving you, Will, and Mr. Monkton, in camp to fall back on," remarked Night Hawk George, and the three set out in search of the desired camp.

Their lucky star led them to the top of a ridge, almost inaccessible, and pierced through by a canyon.

The summit of the ridge was sheltered by a thick growth of trees, and in a ravine was found a spring that sent a trickling stream into the canyon below.

Grass was in abundance, the water was pure, and the position was just such as three men of their ilk could hold against half a hundred attacking them.

"You look as though you had come to stay, George," said Paul Monkton, addressing Night Hawk, who was cutting down saplings with his knife, and preparing to build a shanty.

"I have come to stay until I know whether Frank is alive or dead," was the answer.

"If alive, we'll stay until we get him free; if dead, we'll camp right here until we avenge him," coolly answered Broncho Bill, and his handsome blue eyes burned with feeling until they appeared black.

Then the three men went to work with a will, and by nightfall had erected not only a comfortable shanty, but a very fair little fort, as a protection for themselves and horses if driven to it.

"How far is it to Wolf Fang's village from here, Night Hawk?" asked the young ranchero.

"I will tell you the exact distance when I return to breakfast in the morning," answered the scout as he made his preparations to take the trail alone.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CLOSE CALL FROM DEATH.

To Will Powell there seemed no necessity of a guard being kept by night over their little camp, for they had approached the ridge by a watercourse that covered their trail, leaving no track behind them, and the Indians would not certainly happen up there in the darkness.

They had arranged a plan for their fire, to cook by night, so that the light was hidden, and there would, therefore, be no smoke by day to be discerned afar off.

Shortly after Night Hawk Powell departed upon his night scout Broncho Bill and Paul Monkton turned in, and were not long in having slumber come to them.

With nothing to disturb them, they slept until aroused by the return of the scout at dawn.

Night Hawk had evidently had a night of it, and looked wearied.

As it was not yet good light, his brother quickly built a fire and gave him a cup of strong coffee, which greatly refreshed him.

"Well, Night Hawk, what discoveries?" asked the ranchero, seemingly impatient to know all.

"I will tell you, now that I have rested a little; but I have had a hard night of it."

"You look it, George," said Broncho Bill.

"Well, Frank is alive."

"Thank God!" ejaculated Broncho Bill, while the ranchero said:

"That is glad tidings, and half the battle."

"Yes; he is alive and well, for I was within a hundred feet of him."

"You see, I made my way to the Indian village, around by the northern hills, so that it was a long jaunt; but I felt that I could approach with more safety from that direction, and I did not wish to be seen and spoil all."

"I saw Frank in his tepee, and then he left it and seemed to go the rounds of the village.

"I watched him by the light of the different fires, and saw him return to the tepee.

"I intended to risk it and go there, but saw the chief, Wolf Fang enter, and so gave it up.

"After a long wait I concluded to return, for I was satisfied that Frank was not a prisoner in the village, but on the contrary, as a white medicine-chief was looked upon as a great mogul.

"Anyhow, we will wait a few days and see what turns up, and then I will make another scout and try and communicate with him in some way.

"But, I tell you, next time I'll go on horseback, for that was the roughest road on foot I ever traveled."

And in that little camp several days passed away, and the three men saw no sign of Indians and Night Hawk had made up his mind to go on the following night again to the Indian village.

The next morning, just after dawn, they were awakened by the sound of hoofs, and then of voices.

Instantly they were on the alert, and it did not take them long to discover that quite a party of Indians had halted in the canyon below.

Watching them from their point of observation, they saw two warriors ride off with the ponies of the entire party, and disappear from sight further down the canyon.

"They are planning an ambush," said Night Hawk.

"Who is there to ambush?" asked the ranchero.

"That I do not know; but the old white-haired Indian with straggling gray beard I know."

"Who is he?"

"Death Killer, the big medicine of the tribe."

"What can he want here?"

"I guess he's laying for Frank, who may be starting for home, after showing the tribe old Death Killer didn't know beans when the bag was opened," said Broncho Bill.

"Ah, you think he may mean to get even with your brother?"

"It looks as though he meant to get even with somebody, for he has sent the ponies off with two warriors.

"Do you want that job, Will?"

"To take in the horses?"

"Yes."

"I'll take it," was the cool reply.

"But they have two warriors as guards," urged the ranchero.

"That is all right, I'll get their scalps along with the ponies," answered Will Powell, and there was not the slightest hint of braggadocio about his manner.

"Well, you see they are hiding in the thicket, so see what can be done with the ponies, and if nothing, come back, as we may need you here, Will."

"I'll not be long gone," was the reply, and Broncho Bill started off.

An hour perhaps he was gone, and then he came to where his brother and the ranchero lay, looking over into the canyon, and showed not a trace of having been in any scene of excitement.

Night Hawk simply nodded and asked no questions, but the ranchero was curious and said:

"Well, you are back?"

"Yes."

"Did you get the ponies?"

"Every one of them."

"And the Indians?"

Broncho Bill made no reply, but held up two freshly-taken scalps.

"Ah! how did you do it?"

"Crept close and used my bow and arrow on them, for I did not wish to fire a shot.

"They had a greasy pack of cards and were gambling for all they were worth, when I sent the arrows at them."

"And the ponies?"

"I drove them out of the canyon and around to a spot not far from here, where I left them for future reference.

"Seen any new signs, George?"

Before Night-Hawk could reply a horseman suddenly came in sight.

From the position they held, the watchers could not see him until he was upon the Indians almost, and old Death Killer stepped forth and confronted him.

The horseman was Frank Powell, and what the reader knows occurred between the Indian medicine-man and the surgeon, those on the ridge heard.

And more, when the attack began below on the Surgeon Scout, the three of them joined in above from their place of concealment, with a result already known.

Taken wholly by surprise, the Indians were bewildered with fright, and seeing old Death-Killer go down, they broke away like a herd of frightened deer, rushing through the canyon, back the way they had come, and depending wholly upon their heels for safety.

As quickly as they could get their horses ready, the three men mounted and rode swiftly down to the spot where the scene had occurred.

They found lying there the old medicine-chief and the braves who had fallen with him, while Frank Powell was standing up, his hand to his head, and his face stained with blood.

At sight of his three rescuers, he called out in his cheery tones:

"Well, brother pards, you did the work well on the red-skins, and well-nigh finished me, for one of your shots struck me here, and the hardness of my thick skull alone turned the bullet.

As he spoke he displayed a gash on the side of his head where a bullet had cut its way, inflicting a scalp wound that had momentarily stunned him with the concussion.

"That was a close call from death, Frank; but the bullet must have struck something else, and glancing hit you, for all of us, you know, are not men to send a ball other than where we aim," said Night Hawk.

"Yes, I know each shot I fired, Frank, and—"

"Thank Heaven it is no worse, Powell," quickly added the ranchero, and then the Surgeon Scout put in with:

"Don't mind it, boys, for the wound is nothing; but you came just when I needed you, and saved me from being wiped out, too.

"Looking me up, I guess, brothers mine?"

"Yes, we wanted to see if you had given Janette the shake and married an Indian maiden; but I move we travel now and talk as we go, for this neighborhood is not healthy," said Will Powell.

This advice was at once taken, the party mounting and moving off, and after stopping for the Indian ponies, they pushed on at a rapid pace for the secret retreat of the brothers, where Frank Powell determined to remain until all fear of contagion from small-pox was over.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

NOTHING could have been safer, or more retired, than the secret retreat of the Powells, in the hills miles from the nearest house of a white man.

It was reached by turning off of a trail into a water-course, and continuing along the bed of the stream for a mile to its source, which was in a wild and picturesque spot.

Here the scout and the surgeon had established a *cache*, or hiding-place for supplies, long before, and here it was that the Doctor intended to exile himself for awhile until all danger was over from his causing a spread of the plague among those with whom he might come in contact.

And here, after camping one night with him, his brother and the ranchero left him in his solitude.

It was by no means an unpleasant camping-ground, but on the contrary one to seek, for it had been occupied at different times before, until a shanty had been built and other additions made to render it most comfortable.

With some books he took from his supplies, the Surgeon Scout managed to while away the time when he was not hunting, cooking or sleeping.

One night he retired to his shanty earlier than usual, for a storm was sweeping down with the darkness.

His shanty was water-proof, however, and with a rush lamp he sat there reading when the storm broke in all its fury.

Tired of reading, and lulled by the moaning winds and pattering rain, he threw aside his book and prepared to wrap himself in his blankets for a sound sleep, when his ears caught a sound that caused him to at once put out his light and seize his weapons.

Again the sound was repeated, and it sounded like the chirp of a bird.

Again came a sound, and this time it was the whining of a dog.

The Surgeon Scout knew that the sounds were made by a human being.

But who could it be?

If his brothers they would make themselves known in a different way.

If the ranchero, he would have hailed.

Who then could it be?

But he could not answer the question he asked himself.

If a foe, he would have certainly given no warning.

It must be some one who knew of his retreat, yet feared to approach openly.

With this idea Frank Powell answered the sound by repeating it.

"Pard Doc!" came in a voice from beyond the thicket.

"Ay, ay. Come on, whoever you are," answered the Doctor.

"I am a friend."

"Seeing is believing."

"Come on!" was the response, and Frank Powell sat with his revolver ready to greet a foe.

A moment after a tall form advanced from the thicket and came straight toward the shanty.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes, Doc."

"Ah! it is you, Dead Knife Jim?"

"It are me, Pard Doc."

"Come in out of the rain, and I'll make you comfortable.

"But what in thunder brings you here?"

"I comes in thunder and rain too, Pard Doc; but I comes alone, an' it are ter hev a leetle chat with you."

"Going to turn honest, eh?"

"No, I hain't goin' ter do thet, Doc; but let me go an' fetch my crittur, which I left down the stream, an' then I'll come back an' tell yer why yer must git out o' this, fer ther wolves is on yer track."

"Indeed?"

"Fact."

"Well, I'll not cover up my trail, Jim; but go now and fetch your horse and put him under the shelter with mine, for there is ample room, and this is a cruel night.

"In the mean time I will strike a light and build a fire to give you some supper, and I can find you something dry to put on, for you are as wet as water itself."

Dead Knife Jim disappeared, while Frank Powell, after hastily lighting the fire, over which a roof had been built, threw an oilskin cloak over his shoulders and stepped quickly back to the shelter where he kept his horse.

Here he stood watching and waiting, ready to match deviltry with prompt action, if the outlaw was playing him false.

But Dead Knife Jim soon appeared, leading his horse, and the animal seemed most glad to get into a dry shelter, and find an armful of cut grass for his supper.

"Now, Jim, I can look after you," said the Doctor.

"Suspicioned me, didn't you, Doc?" remarked the outlaw, slyly.

"Yes, Jim."

"Don't blame yer, an' ef I'd hev meant wrong I'd got bored, sart'in, fer I thought yer was in yer caving."

Frank Powell now led the way into his shanty and gave the strange visitor some dry clothing, and set about cooking supper for him.

Dead Knife Jim ate his supper with evident relish, and then said:

"They tells me you has tamed Injun, Doc-ter?"

"Yes."

"Big Medicine o' ther Sioux?"

"Yes, I attended them through a plague."

"Had better let 'em died."

"If it had been your gang perhaps I would have done so."

"No, guess not; fer you hes it in yer ter medicine up a snake ef it strikes yer pity; but Injuns is no good."

"And outlaws?"

"Waal, yer hes me thar; but, Pard Doc, you is in danger."

"I know that, Jim."

"Yer don't know what I knows."

"How can I, if you do not tell me?"

"I intends ter tell yer, fer that are why I hev comed here."

"Well, out with it."

"Yer lay-out here are known."

"So it seems, as you found it."

"And Cap'n Kit knows it."

"Indeed?"

"Fact."

"How did he find it out?"

"He has ways o' knowin' things thet I can't git onter exactly."

"But ther talk jist now is how you sakified yerself fer them Injuns, an' run ther risk o' bein' kilt, scalpt and small-pox'd."

"Then it are known thet you is layin' here, waitin' fer ther contamination ter git off of yer afore yer returns ter ther fort."

"Well?"

"So ther cap'n he put up a leetle job ter come heur an' jist wipe yer out."

"He did, eh?"

"Yas, Doc."

"You know this?"

"I does."

"Tell me more about it, please."

"I'll do it."

"Yer see, I heerd ther cap'n layin' a plan with eight o' ther boys ter go with him ter this place."

"He thinks it will take nine to kill me?"

"Jist about; fer he is acquainted with yer."

"So I heerd 'em talk it over, an' ther cap'n takes out a leetle map he had drawed, an' showed 'em jist whar you was an' how ter reach it."

"I larns when they is ter start, an' I manages ter see ther map, an' next day I ask'd ther cap'n ef I c'u'dn't run courier fer him ter ther station, fer yer knows he sends a man thar every week fer news o' trains a-comin', an' which his spies keeps him posted on."

"I told him my arm war a-hurtin' me, whar you cut it off, an' I wanted ter consult a Doctor o' Physics regardin' it, an' c'u'd fetch back his mail."

"So he lets me go, an' I jist comes a-tearin' here ter tell you."

"You are certainly my friend, Jim."

"I am fer a fact, Doc."

"When must I expect them?"

"Ter-morrer night, I guess."

"And you found your way here from his description?"

"I did, Doc."

"Well, Jim, they'll find the bird flown, and the nest empty, for I intended to depart tomorrow, although it would be sooner than I said I would leave; but I am convinced there is no danger to any one now that I should meet, and I expect to hunt along lively on my way back."

"But I appreciate what you have done, Jim."

"Don't sing that tune, Doc, for I doesn't want no thanks; but how w'u'd it do ter light out o' here jist arter daybreak, fer this rain are goin' ter continue, I guesses, all ter-morrer, an' our trail will be washed out, an' can't be follered, an' I hain't hopin' ter hev Captain Hyena know I hes been visitin' ther wrong doctor."

"And your arm, does it give you pain, Jim?"

"No, sir, it are serene as silk, an' I hardly misses it."

"Sometime arter I losed it, I did feel a leetle blue, an' thought I'd look up ther grave whar my arm were planted, an' weep o' it's mem'ry; but then I got over that feelin' as a feller might who hed lost a mother-in-law."

"But shall we light out in ther morning?"

"Yes."

"Then let's snooze, Doc, fer I is half-asleep," and five minutes after the surgeon and the outlaw were wrapped in their blankets, the former wide awake, for he was yet suspicious of his outlaw friend.

But the morning broke without disturbance, breakfast was gotten ready, and then the two men mounted their horses and rode away in the rain, which still fell in torrents, the outlaw going on his errand as a courier, and the Surgeon Scout heading for Monkton Ranch.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A TIMELY ARRIVAL.

TOWARD noon, as Frank Powell and Dead Knife Jim rode along together, the storm broke away and the sun came out.

Then the two halted for the mid-day rest, and Dead Knife Jim went on alone, the Surgeon Scout determining to camp there until the following day.

He parted with the outlaw in a friendly manner, and said:

"Well, Jim, I can only say that you have got too big a heart to be such a rascal, and I can only repay your kindness by saving your neck some day when you get the hangman after you."

"Don't fergit it, Doc, ef that kind o' a pilgrim do get his clutch on me some time. But good luck to yer, an' far'well."

With this, Dead Knife Jim rode on his way across the prairie.

At this point the prairie was dotted with numerous little "timber islands," from an acre to three acres in size, and one of these the Doctor Scout had chosen as his camp.

Killing an antelope and some other game, he made himself comfortable, and retired to rest when night came with the glad feeling that the next afternoon would find him among friends.

He had been asleep an hour, perhaps, when he awoke with the glimmer of a light in his face.

Quickly he was upon his feet, to discover that a camp-fire had just been built in one of the little timber islands about half a mile distant.

"Whoever they are, they do not fear foes near, evidently," he said, and he watched the fire for a long time, until it died away into a glimmer.

He had seen through the trees forms moving to and fro, yet could not distinguish who they were.

Determined to depart before dawn, he again threw himself down to rest.

But from some cause he overslept himself, something he never did when danger was abroad, and awoke with a start to find it broad daylight and the sun just appearing above the horizon.

His first glance was in the direction of the timber where he had seen the fire the night before.

Instantly his eyes fell upon a party of horsemen, just leaving the timber and coming directly toward him.

One look was sufficient to show just who they were.

There were nine in the party, and the one in advance wore a crimson mask.

They were Captain Kit, the Red Angel, and his men.

Their destination, Frank Powell knew, was to his retreat, and their way led them right by the timber, where they could not fail to see him.

The storm had delayed them a day doubtless, in their intended secret attack on him, which Dead Knife Jim had made known.

To spring to the side of his horses, throw the pack-saddle upon one and his own saddle upon the other, was the work of a few moments.

Then the animals were watered at the spring, and the Surgeon Scout mounted and rode out of the timber upon the other side.

He did not seek a conflict, and knew that eight men, led by Captain Kit, were to be dreaded and avoided.

But he hardly expected to keep out of their sight, though he made an effort to do so, by keeping the timber between him and them.

In this, however, he had nearly succeeded, when one of the outlaws chanced to drop his hat, and dismounting to pick it up, his eyes fell upon the Surgeon Scout making haste across the prairie, having almost escaped their observation.

His yell attracted the attention of all, and a chorus of cheers broke from their lips as they caught sight of the very man they were going to attack.

"There is our game, men; press on after him!" yelled Captain Kit, and seating themselves well in their saddles, the outlaws at once began the chase.

The Surgeon Scout was hardly over a quarter of a mile from them, and, seeing himself discovered, he at once set off in a swift gallop, his led horse, bearing his valuable white-beaver robe and bonnet with his other traps, following close behind the heels of his equine companion.

Seeing that the outlaws were pressing him hard and gaining, the Surgeon Scout urged his animals to greater speed, and thus held his own.

But the Red Angels were determined to capture the famous Doctor, and were urged on by offers of large rewards by Captain Kit, so that their horses were spurred cruelly on in the hot chase.

Frank Powell found that both of his horses were good ones, but the pack-animal held back a little, or otherwise he would have dropped his pursuers.

He did not care to give up his trophies, nor to lose the animal, so he clung to him, determined to fight rather than ride on and leave the horse.

The outlaws seemed to realize this, and still came on at the same killing pace, which caused them to steadily gain a trifle.

In this way mile after mile was gone over, and a couple or more hours passed.

In this time the outlaws had decreased the distance between them and the Doctor about one-half, and it seemed that they must soon come within range.

By leaving his led horse, Frank Powell felt that he was safe, for the animal he bestrode still ran steadily and strong, and did not show the signs of failing which the other did.

Looking back closely the Surgeon Scout saw that the horses of his pursuers were also showing some signs of distress, and he felt no anxiety as to the result.

But the outlaws, still pressing nearer, the Red Angel chief was seen to suddenly halt, spring from his horse, throw his rifle across his saddle and fire.

"Too bad!" said Powell, as he saw his led horse fall heavily.

But in an instant he had dismounted, cut loose the pack from his back, thrown it behind his own saddle, and again started on in his race for life.

The halt, however, had caused him to lose valuable time, and the Red Angels crept up alarmingly.

He knew now that he was within range, and yet he was hampered by holding on to the pack, and could not use his own trusty rifle.

And worse still, although the pack-saddle weighed hardly over sixty pounds, that extra weight was sufficient to prevent his noble horse from springing ahead, as he could have done without it.

"I risked my life to get this trophy, and by Heaven, I'll risk my life to keep it," muttered Frank Powell, as his horse sped along, the outlaws holding their own steadily, if not gaining a trifle.

He expected each moment to see the chief

halt and try another shot, and he was unable to use his rifle, as his hold on the pack could not be released.

"If I could only throw my rifle to my shoulder, Captain Hyena, I could bring you to a halt," he murmured.

Then, glancing about him he continued:

"Two hours more at this rate will bring me to Monkton Ranch; but the horse can never keep up this killing pace."

"Hal! they are knifing* their horses to urge them on."

This cruel process had the effect of driving the horses more rapidly, and the Surgeon Scout saw that they were in deadly earnest in their pursuit, and now gaining rapidly.

"I'll have to draw up soon and fight it out, that is certain."

"I'll take that ridge for it," he said, coolly, his eyes falling upon a rise of the prairie a few hundred yards beyond.

He now found that he had to aid and steady his tired horse some with the reins, for the animal was going at a pace that he could not stand long.

But up the prairie slope he went, and reaching the top of the rise the Surgeon Scout suddenly drew rein, sprung to the ground and seized his rifle.

Just then, before he could swing it around from his back, a ringing cheer was heard upon his right, and there came dashing toward him a party, the sight of whom brought a war-cry from his lips.

The outlaws also saw this party, and halting suddenly, massed themselves together and began to retreat at a slow trot.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BLACK COWBOYS AND THEIR CAPTAIN.

THE party that had so suddenly come upon the scene was a peculiar one.

The prairie sloped away beyond the rise into what was almost a ravine, or, more properly speaking a vale, and up this came at a gallop those who had attracted the attention of Doctor Powell, and also caused the Red Angels to turn about and move doggedly off.

Under other circumstances the Red Angel chief might have dared a conflict with those who appeared, for his men were thoroughly trained to meet any foe in battle, and often had to fight against fearful odds.

But he had driven his horses hard, and they were too fagged out to think of his catching those before him, if they chose to fly from him with their fresh animals, while they could ride all around him and worry him, did they so desire.

What was best for him to do, therefore, for his own safety, he did—retreat.

Frank Powell saw the outlaws retire with a sullen smile, and then turned to his panting horse and kindly took off the saddle, to give him a good breathing-spell.

Hardly had he done this when up dashed those who had so changed the position of affairs.

In advance was none other than Janette Joslyn, looking very beautiful in her close-fitting habit and sombrero, and sitting upon her pony with the air of a perfect horsewoman.

The animal was a beautiful spotted mustang, which she had won by killing the Indian chief who rode him, when he was pursuing her one day, and she was proud of her capture, for she knew his worth.

About her waist was a belt containing a pair of revolvers, a present from the surgeon to her, and buckled to her saddle on one side was a small rifle, and she was a dead shot, as she had proven more than once.

At her back rode a dozen horsemen.

They were all mounted on jet-black, wiry ponies that had the look of go and endurance in them.

And the riders were black, too, for they were colored men, and a daring, dashing set of fellows, clad in buckskin hunting-shirt and leggings, cavalry boots, and wearing sombreros.

All of them were armed thoroughly with bowies, revolvers, a rifle and a lariat each, and they were experts in the use of them, too.

These were the black bravos, as they were

* Bordermen learned from the Indians a cruel habit of pricking their horses with their knives, to urge them to more rapid speed when needed.—THE AUTHOR.

often called, but Major Monkton called them his black cowboys, and the red-skins, and outlaws, too, had come to fear them, for they were desperate fighters if brought to the scratch, and as a guard they were a wholesome warning to any foes who cared to attack the ranch or raid its cattle.

"Oh, Frank! how glad I am to see you," cried Janette, grasping the hand of Doctor Powell in both of her own.

"And me too, Doctor," called out Zip, the leader of the black cowboys, while his comrades joined in with:

"Yas, massa, mighty glad."

"So we is, sah."

"New you's talkin', fer we is happy."

"You bet we is tickled, Massa Doctor," and so on, until each one had his say and a grasp of the Doctor's hand.

"And let me say that I am glad to see you, for if you had not arrived as you did, I guess I'd have gone under; but you are not afraid of catching the small-pox, Janette?" and the Doctor's eyes twinkled slyly.

"No, sir, I'm so glad to catch you that I'd be willing to take the small-pox with you."

"That is a pretty speech, and I thank you; but what are you doing so far from the ranch, Janette?"

"Oh, I wanted to have a hunt, and the major sent the boys with me."

"Yas, Doctor, Missy Janette am our captain now, sah."

"And I appoint you surgeon, so let us be off, for yonder rascals must not escape," and Janette pointed to the retreating outlaws.

"They *must* escape, Janette, for it would never do for us to pursue them," said the Doctor.

"But why not?"

"They are Captain Hyena and his Red Angels."

"That I know, and one, two, three—yes, nine of them, and, with you, fourteen of us."

"That may be, but to kill one of them would be no loss, while for you, or any of the major's gallant cowboys to fall, would be a bitter blow."

"But we can try them at long range at least," urged Janette.

"No, let them go this time, and we will go to the ranch, whither I was bound when those fellows made me hurry along."

"Will you change horses with me, for your light weight my good horse will not feel, and Zip, I will let you boys divide my traps between you for transportation."

This was done and the party started for the ranch, the Red Angels now being afar off upon the prairie.

A ride of several hours brought them to the ranch, where a warm welcome awaited them from Major Monkton, the Surgeon Scout being greeted with the warmth the old ranchero might have shown to a brother.

The following day Frank Powell went on his way to the fort, where he was greeted with rousing cheers by officers and soldiers alike, for, the sentry on duty having reported him in sight, coming across the prairie, the band was called out and the troops drawn up in line to receive him as one who had proven himself far more than an ordinary hero, and accomplished that which few men could, or would attempt to do.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WHITE BEAVER'S BOLD GAME.

SEVERAL days after the return of Frank Powell to the fort, he was coming along the trail one afternoon from Monkton Ranch, where he had been on his almost daily visit to Janette, when he rode into a piece of timber to discover four men before him.

They had only a moment before discovered his approach, and three of them seemed to be hurrying up a little affair they were anxious to get off their hands with the quickest dispatch.

The situation presented to the eye of the Surgeon Scout was a strange one, and certainly a trying one for the parties immediately concerned.

That a tragedy was about to be enacted Frank Powell did not need to be told, for he saw one man standing under a tree, and about his neck was a lariat.

The other end of the lariat was thrown over the branch of a tree, and the other three

men were pulling upon it as the Surgeon Scout appeared.

It was a most thrilling and suggestive tableau.

Seeing what was going on, he spurred quickly to the spot, and by one pull of his powerful arm dragged the lariat from the hands of those who held it, while he cried in an angry tone:

"By Heaven, men! this shall not be!"

"But he deserves it, surgeon, indeed he do, sir," answered one of the men.

Frank Powell recognized them as men from the fort, whose position was that of half teamster, half scout, and not much of anything in particular.

"He may deserve hanging, but it is not for you to become his executioners," was the stern reply.

"We captured him, sir; when he was asleep we came upon him and took him, sir, though he fought like a tiger, ef he hain't got but one arm, and he's a Red Angel."

"I know who he is very well; he is Dead Knife Jim, of Captain Hyena's Red Angel band."

"That are my name, Pard Doc, an' ef you hedn't arrove when yer did it w'u'd hev hed ter be put on a tombstone, I'm thinkin'," said the prisoner, coolly.

"He knows whar ther band hides their dust, Surgeon Powell, and as he wouldn't tell us, we just was going to hang him, for he is our prize."

"Well, I want you to release him, men."

The three gazed at the surgeon in amazement.

"Release him, sir?" gasped one.

"Yes, for he has saved my life, yes, more than once and I wish to do as much for him, now that he needs aid."

"He has a price on his head, sir."

"Yes, he's worth money."

"We kin git ther dust fer him by tarnin' him over to the major, sir," said the captors.

"What is the price on his head?" asked Powell.

"Don't know, adzackly, sir; does you, Tom?"

"No, I disremembers, too; but you knows, don't you, Bill?"

"No, I disrecollects, too."

"I knows; it are a thousand dollars, an' I are wuth more," said Dead Knife Jim, with the utmost complacency.

"Well, you don't expect us to throw ther thousand away, sir?"

"No, for I will pay you that sum to let him go."

"You, sir?"

"Yes, I will give you the sum to divide between you upon my return to the fort."

"But, Surgeon Powell, ther man oughter hang, an' it won't be right fer us to let him go while you'd get inter trouble fer it."

"As for myself, I take all responsibility, and need no advice from you, Bill Lane, or your comrades."

"I offer you the money, and you have but to refuse or accept."

"I decline it, sir."

"And me."

"If we took him in, sir," said the third, "I think we'd get more."

"That's so, he are worth more, as he just said."

"Yas, we wants more ter sell him, an' to keep your secret, sir, so you won't get court-martialed."

The eyes of Frank Powell flashed as he said:

"You infamous scoundrels, you would extort gold from me as hush-money, but I will offer you no terms now but these:

"This man is my prisoner, and with the words the revolvers leaped fairly from their holsters and seemed to cover each of the three men.

The men were taken wholly aback at this bold stand; but they knew their surgeon too well to parley, and one said quickly, with a sickly smile:

"You has your way, surgeon, an' we caves."

"Yes, we'll take ther thousand, sir."

"Not one dollar do you get."

"Here, Dead Knife Jim, is your horse; mount him and depart."

"I say, Doc, you is—"

"Don't stop to talk, man, but go," sternly said the surgeon.

"You're right, go is my strong hold now, Pard Doc, ef ye'll only untie this single arm o' mine."

"Set that man's arm free!" sternly ordered the Doctor Scout.

The man upon whom his eye rested obeyed sullenly.

"Now, Doc, I'm off, an' gents, ef I meets you ag'in, it won't be me thet is caught asleep."

With this, Dead Knife Jim walked off a few paces to where his horse was tied, picking up his belt of arms as he did so, and then turning, said:

"Doc, them gerloots will tell what you did an' git you inter trouble."

"Better let me bore a hole in 'em an' say nothin' about it."

"No, sir, they can do me no harm."

Dead Knife then started to mount, but stopped with his foot in the stirrup and said:

"Pard Doc, you know I is a outlaw?"

"Yes, and a bad one."

"Fact! but I keeps ther pot boilin' by robbin' folks."

"Well?"

"Don't yer think yer'd better let me take what dust them pilgrims hes about thar close?"

In spite of the seriousness of the situation, Frank Powell laughed.

Then he answered:

"Jim, you are a born rascal, and will die one."

"Begone!"

"I'm off, Doc, but I thought I'd ask yer."

"Ta-ta, gents," and with a kiss of his hand to those who had lost their prize in losing him, he rode away.

"Now, Surgeon Powell, won't you come to terms with us?" boldly said one of the men.

"What do you mean by terms?"

"You've set a Red Angel free, and it will cause you trouble, as you know, sir; but if you'll give us one thousand in dust, we'll say nothing about it all around."

"You can say what you please; but I shall make my report when I go to the fort, and, for your base attempt to hang that man, I will march you to the fort as my prisoners, so drop your weapons quick and mount your horses, unless you wish to quarrel with me."

The three men had no desire to quarrel with the surgeon of the fort, for they knew him too well, so obeyed his orders, and, having dismounted and picked up their arms, he drove them before him to the fort, where he made his report of just what had occurred.

"You have done a bold thing, Powell; but, knowing as I do just what that fellow has done for you, and how he crept into Captain Burt's camp, the very night that you had cut his arm off, to warn him of the intended attack of the Indians, I will make no report of it, and, to drop the affair, I will release those three men with a reprimand."

"But, having returned the service you owe that devilish outlaw, do me the favor to shoot him at sight the next time you see him," and with this Major Benteen dropped the matter, certainly to the relief of the surgeon, who knew that he had done that which would cause him trouble if pressed against him by his commandant.

CHAPTER XXX.

A MISCHIEVOUS SCHEME ON FOOT.

THE reader, I trust, has not forgotten Kirk Kendrick, the courier, who played such an important part in feminine attire.

That worthy, after his return to the fort, without the shadow of a suspicion upon him, continued to play his cards so well, that from Major Benton down to the sutler of the fort, he would have been trusted with any secret of importance, or any sum of money.

One day, soon after the release of Dead Knife Jim at the hands of Doctor Powell, a train of emigrants, bound down on the South Platte, encamped in the neighborhood of the fort for a night.

The emigrants and soldiers mingled freely together, the former relating their experiences to the latter, and glad to find out from those who knew, just what they would have to face upon arriving at their destination.

Among those of the train who sought the sutler's store to make needed purchases, was an old man who had joined the train only a couple of days before, stating that he was a

hunter, had wandered further from his horse on the South Platte than he wanted to, and desired to go with the train on their way.

All willingly granted the permission to the old-fashioned hunter, and he attracted no further particular attention.

Going to the sutler's he asked quietly if there was a soldier then in the fort by the name of Kendrick.

Answered in the affirmative, he asked to see him, and was directed to the quarters of the courier of that name.

Called out by his comrades, Kendrick advanced, looked fixedly at the old man, who said quickly:

"Why, Kendrick, my boy, you haven't forgot old Hunter Billy, hev yer?"

Kendrick changed color, but there was that in the man's face that warned him to be careful, and he answered:

"No, indeed; how are you, Hunter Billy?"

"Prime as pelts in season, boy; but come 'long, I wants to talk with yer 'bout old times, fer I hasn't long to stay, as I'm with ther train camped yonder."

Kendrick got his cap and accompanied the old man to a secluded spot, when he asked:

"Now, who the deuce is old Hunter Billy?"

"A angel from Paradise, pard, or that is, a Red Angel," was the answer.

Again the courier changed color, while he said, simply:

"Oh, you are?"

"Yes."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I come from the chief."

"You do?"

"Yes, Cap'n Hyena sent me."

"Ye see, he was going to attack ther train, but concluded it was too poor, and he made it do some good by my j'inin' it to come here."

"Did Captain Kit send me any word?"

"Yes, a heap."

"What did he say?"

"Thet you must tell him ef there was any courier orders to run on soon."

"Yes, I start next week, Saturday, on a run."

"Any big biz?"

"Yes, I am to bring back something of importance."

"That's it, so you are to meet him at the timber whar he tackled the stage that day."

"At what time, going out or coming in?"

"Coming in."

"I'll be there before dark on Tuesday."

"All right, I'll tell him; but he wants you to come fixed."

"How fixed?"

"Ready to j'ine."

"Oh!"

"That's it."

"I'll be ready, old man."

"All right, I guesses I'd better go now, fer thar hain't anything ter keep me here, an' I hates forts an' sojers."

"You are not honest, I guess," said the courier, with a light laugh.

"That's just it, and I hates them as is."

"But goo'-by, boy, we'll see each other ag'in—goo'-by."

With this the old man departed from the fort.

It was just dark, and the camp-fires were lighted in the train encampment.

But around none of them was Hunter Billy, and no one missed him.

But when the train pulled out on its way, and had gone some distance, he was observed not to be along, and it was believed that he preferred to stop a while at the fort, where he had said that he had friends among the soldiers.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DESERTER AND THE OUTLAW CHIEF.
It was the Tuesday afternoon, when the courier had made his appointment to meet the chief of the Red Angels.

The sun was still an hour above the horizon, as a horseman rode along the trail leading to the rendezvous in the timber.

It was Kirk Kendrick, the courier, and he was well mounted and armed.

His horse showed no signs of having been hard pressed, as was usual with courier horses, but went along at an easy gait, his rider seemingly lost in deep thought.

"I hope he will not be there."

"If not I shall act upon my own responsibility and go my way with what I have, and it will be believed at the fort that I was murdered."

So he muttered as he rode along, until the timber came in view, and then he gazed earnestly at it, as though to pierce its density.

The trail led by it, within easy pistol-range, but leaving the beaten track, the courier rode directly into the timber.

At first he saw no one.

Then he discovered in the distance a man watching him.

Recognizing the form of the Red Angel chief, he rode toward him.

The chief, still in his crimson feather mask, was standing by the side of a large tree, while his horse was cropping the grass near him.

"Well, Kendrick, you are on time, I am glad to see," he called out, as the courier approached.

"Oh, yes, I always keep my appointments."

"Well, dismount, and we'll have a talk, for there is work for you to do."

"What is it?"

"Leave your horse there, and I will tell you."

The courier obeyed, and the two sat down together on a log.

"Now, Kendrick, what have you with you that is valuable?" asked quietly the chief.

"More than I expected, for outside of what the paymaster sent me after, is a package of money turned over to him by an officer for safe-keeping."

"What is the sum the paymaster sent you after?"

"Sixty-five hundred dollars."

"Ah, and the other money?"

"Eight thousand."

"Well, we can afford to be honest, can we not?"

"I do not understand you."

"I intended not to touch the paymaster's money, as I wished you to return to the fort; but as nothing is known of this last package, we will divide that between us; you say nothing about it, and go on to the fort."

"Why must I go there?"

"I need you there."

"Why?"

"I wish you to get possession of, in some way, half a dozen cavalry saddles and bridles, and troopers' uniforms."

"For what?"

"I need them, and you must get them."

"It will be hard to do."

"Not if you play your cards right."

"These I must have in three days, and you must meet me at Willow Ford with them by sunset of the third day."

"I'll try."

"You must do it."

"Suppose I cannot?"

"You must."

"Well, I will do my best, and I can do no more."

"When are you expected to start on another trip?"

"In three days."

"That fits well, and you must do it, for I observed that you had full sway at the fort, doing pretty much as you pleased."

"You observed it?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"The other day."

"Do you mean to say you were at the fort?"

"Yes."

The courier shook his head, and then the chief, with a light laugh, said:

"My disguise was good if you did not penetrate it."

"I did not see you."

"You did."

"I do not remember it."

"Do you remember old Hunter Billy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I was Hunter Billy."

"Impossible."

"It is a fact."

"Why, that man's face was not made up."

"It was, for a fact."

"You ought to have gone upon the stage; you would have made your fortune."

"I am making my fortune now off of a stage, whenever I get a chance."

"I got you from one," was the significant reply.

"I wish now that I had scanned your face more closely, that I might have seen where I had met you before, and just who you are."

"It would have done you no good, for you saw only the face of an old man."

"But you are not an old man."

"How do you know?"

"Your neck, your hands, your voice do not show it."

"Well, no matter who I am; but do your duty toward me, and you shall not regret it."

"Now, don't let me detain you, for it is time you were going on your way."

"Remember, at the Willow Ford, the third day from this we meet, and bring half a dozen saddles, bridles and uniforms along with you."

"If I can."

"If you don't I shall send a letter to Major Benteen about you," was the remark, in a quiet way, but it made the deserter start and turn pale.

"Is that all?" he asked, after a slight pause.

"Yes; except that I'll take the eight thousand, and keep your share as a hold on you."

He took the money package from the sachel, and Kirk Kendrick mounted his horse and rode on, muttering to himself:

"That man got the best of me, for had he let me have the four thousand I should have gone my way, and he should never have seen me again."

"But the sixty-five hundred I have here is not enough to tempt me."

"No, I must do as he says; desert and go to him, for I cannot help it."

CHAPTER XXXII.

CAPTAIN KIT'S DARING PLAN

It was an exciting time along the border, for Wolf Fang, having gotten his warriors in trim again, after the scourge that had fallen upon them, was beginning to threaten the settlements and ranches once more with small bands, while it was rumored that he intended to make a sweeping raid at the head of his entire force of braves.

The Red Angels, too, had been quite troublesome of late, and consequently settlers in small communities, isolated rancheros, and the soldiers were on the *qui vive* for anything that might transpire of a perilous nature.

On account of these troubles Frank Powell, anxious about Janette, in spite of her brave defenders, had urged her to become his wife and remove to the fort, a thing which she had consented to do.

The evening appointed for the meeting with the deserter by Captain Kit was the one upon which the Surgeon Scout and Janette were to be married, and the happy groom, with the chaplain, with his brother, Night Hawk, and several officers, had ridden over to Monkton Ranch, where was the major, his nephew, and the happy bride awaiting them, along with the negroes, whose faces were radiant with smiles, at the joyous occasion, mingled with looks of sadness at the thought of losing "dear Missy Janette."

While the surgeon and his friends were riding toward the ranch, a horseman, with two led pack-horses, was making his way toward a willow-fringed stream that lay upon the trail before them.

It was Kirk Kendrick, the deserter.

He was mounted upon his best horse, and the two he was leading, and which carried packs securely done up in canvas, were his other fast flyers that had carried him so often swiftly over the dangerous trails a courier has to ride.

Arriving at the stream he found a ford there, but turned one side into the thicket without crossing.

It was not yet the sunset hour, and hitching his horses, he began to pace to and fro, lost in deep reverie.

Suddenly the splashing of water startled him, and he ran to a spot that gave him a view of the ford.

There were a dozen horsemen crossing the stream.

At their head rode Captain Hyena, the outlaw chief, and those who followed him were his men, Dead Knife Jim riding second in the line.

As they reached the side on which Kirk

Kendrick stood, he stepped forward and greeted them, and the act nearly cost him his life, for a dozen revolvers covered him in an instant, while Dead Knife Jim shouted:

"Hands up, soldier pard!"

Realizing his mistake and his danger, as he was clad in uniform, the courier obeyed the stern order with an alacrity that saved his life, while Captain Kit called out:

"Hold, men! this man is my friend."

It was evident that the outlaws were not in all the secrets of their chief; but they obeyed his orders, and their captain continued:

"Kendrick, you were a fool to show yourself as you did, and it might have cost you your life."

"It very nearly did, and I saw my mistake instantly; but I supposed your men knew you were coming here to meet me."

"No, sir, they know only so much of my affairs as it is necessary for them to know."

"I plot, plan and command, and it is for them to execute and obey, if they wish to share the result."

"Now you are prompt again, I see."

"Yes, I have ridden courier long enough to learn to be always on time."

"And the things I wanted?"

"Are with the horses back in the thicket."

"And you have come to stay?"

"How can I do otherwise?"

"Did you have any trouble in getting away?"

"Yes, for saddles, bridles and horses cannot be easily taken out of a fort."

"But I lowered the saddles one night over the stockade and hid them in the timber a mile away."

"The next night I took the bridles, and on this morning led my three horses out to pasture, and here I am."

"You have done well," and turning to the men the chief continued:

"Men, this gentleman is my friend, and a new member of the Red Angel band."

"In truth, I shall make him my lieutenant, though it means no reflection on you, Dead Knife Jim, who have been serving in that capacity of late, and who I know does not like the place."

Kirk Kendrick bowed at the introduction, while the outlaws nodded in response, for all of them had seen him, and most of them had taken flying shots at him as he sped along riding express.

"Pard, you is welcome to ther place, so far as I is consarned, for I does not hanker at bein' no loot'nent nor cap'n so long as the prize-money goes round squar' accordin' to my desarts," said Dead Knife Jim by way of making the new recruit feel easy in his position as an outlaw officer.

"Well, men, we go into camp here for a while, and then there is work to be done to-night."

"Now, Kendrick, tell me what the news is at the fort."

"All quiet, though excited about your recent acts, and the fear of Wolf Fang's pouncing down upon the settlements and ranches."

"And they'll have that fear of me and the Indians as long as the Government keeps a handful of men in a post where there should be a thousand for duty."

"But I am not complaining, I assure you."

"Now tell me if you have not forgotten an important piece of your tidings?"

"No."

"Think."

"I recall nothing that would interest you."

"Ah! is there not to be a wedding?"

"True, the surgeon is to marry a most lovely girl, and if she is as deserving of him as he is of her they'll lead a most happy life, and I wish them joy."

"You seem enthusiastic about the affair."

"I admire both parties, and particularly Surgeon Powell."

"He is very popular, I believe?"

"Decidedly so."

"To night he is to be married?"

"Yes."

"At the fort?"

"No."

"Where?"

"At Monkton Ranch, where the lady dwells."

"Where is he now?"

"He was to leave for the ranch to-day."

"With an escort?"

"No. On account of the Indians threatening, only a couple of officers, the chaplain and Night Hawk Powell, were to go with him."

"Where is his other brother?"

"Broncho Bill?"

"Of course; has he any more of a kind like himself than those I have met?"

"No."

"I am glad to hear it, for half a dozen such men would make me hunt new scenes for my work."

"Those three are a terror."

"They are indeed, Kendrick, and my men would rather fight a squadron than that trio."

"Why, the boys say they are bullet-proof, call them wizards, and thoroughly believe they are allied to the devil."

"But where is Broncho Bill?"

"Down on his ranch, I believe."

"I am glad to know it, and only hope that he will stay there."

"Now tell me when this wedding is to take place?"

"To-night."

"Good! No one knows that you have deserted?"

"No, and I wish that I could have left, from not returning from a ride on the trail, when it would have been thought that you or the Indians had captured or killed me."

"It suited me best to have you desert as you did."

"They will know it soon?"

"Yes, for I left a note with my chum telling him I was forced to leave the service, and he will get that when he comes in to-night from cattle-guarding."

"This works just as I could wish."

"Now it is about ten miles from here to Monkton Ranch."

"I was never there."

"That is about the distance, and I wish you to go there to-night."

"Me?"

"Yes; there is work for you to do there."

"What work?"

"You must ride up to the ranch, just after the wedding, and say to Surgeon Powell that you have been sent by the major to ask him to come with all speed to the fort, as Captain Burt has been seriously wounded."

"But he has not been—"

"Man, have some sense, for I know what I am about."

"Before you go into the ranch, tie this string around the leg of your horse, and before you have ridden far with the surgeon on his return, the animal will be lame, and you ask to go back and get a fresh pony from the major."

"What am I to do all this for?"

"When you get near the ranch, you will meet half a dozen horsemen awaiting you."

"They will be my men; but they will be in the full uniform of soldiers, you understand."

"Taking the string off of the leg of your horse, it will no longer lame him, and you can go back to the ranch with these men and say to the lady that the Doctor, her husband, met an officer and party of soldiers coming from the fort, and urged her to come right on with them, as there was news of danger from the up-country, and he must have her with him."

"Great God! do you mean harm against that girl?" cried Kendrick, now realizing all that the chief was plotting for.

"No, I only mean to get a big ransom for her, which I know will be paid."

"Surgeon Powell is not a rich man."

"He owns a claim in Colorado which he does not know the value of, and I will trade him back his wife for it, you see."

"And this is what you are after?"

"Exactly."

"Well, I suppose, having put my head in the lion's mouth, I dare not attempt to draw it out, so I shall have to do as you say."

"Now what is the next act?"

"When you get away from the ranch with the girl, Dead Knife Jim will guide you to where I am."

"He is that one-armed man over there?"

"Yes."

"All right."

"See that you understand your instructions now."

"I do; but suppose the lady goes with the surgeon?"

"Ah, well put; you'll make a good outlaw yet, Kendrick."

"Well, you must tell Surgeon Powell that the major bids you say to him not to attempt to bring his wife, as the prairie is full of red-skins; but also say that the officers and Night Hawk Powell are to return with him, and urge the necessity of his riding at full speed the whole way to save the captain, as the assistant surgeon can do nothing."

"I understand."

"Then we will get out the uniforms, and have all in readiness for the work to be done," and the two men walked over and joined the group, while Dead Knife Jim muttered:

"Thar's suthin' going wrong toward Doc Powell, which I doesn't ketch onto."

"Ef I did, I'd warn him ef it cost me a fight fer it."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FLIGHT BY NIGHT.

OVER the night-shadowed prairies a number of horses with riders upon their backs were dashing swiftly along.

Their course lay to the southwest, in the direction of the Colorado line, and they were evidently pushing on from some motive that required great haste.

There were nine in the party, one riding some distance in advance. Then two rode side by side, and behind them came six men, three abreast.

The latter were dressed in uniform, as the starlight showed; and one of the two who rode side by side wore a soldier's dress.

The other was a woman, and sat on her horse with the same ease that did her male companions.

He who led the party was clad in buckskin, wore a broad sombrero, and even in the darkness it could be seen that he had but one arm, the right being missing.

The time was the night following the meeting of Captain Kit and the deserter courier at the Willow Ford.

After this description I need hardly tell the reader that those men in uniform were outlaws in disguise, and that the plot of the Hyena Captain had so far gone well for him and against poor Janette Joslyn.

"Why does that guide go in this direction?" asked Janette, after miles had been gone over.

"To avoid meeting any strolling bands of red-skins, miss," was the answer of Kirk Kendrick, the one who rode by her side.

"This wide divergence from the trail will keep us until to-morrow afternoon to reach the fort," continued Janette.

"The guide knows best, miss, and Surgeon Powell told him to see that no harm befell his wife if he went a hundred miles round to secure safety."

"Very well, I must say no more then, only it seems he is going wholly wrong."

After this Janette had little to say, and the party dashed on at the same rapid speed until the horses began to yield to fatigue.

Then the guide drew rein in a clump of timber and said:

"Must change horses here, miss."

"Change horses here?" asked Janette in surprise.

"Yes, miss; them's the cap'n's orders."

"What captain? Who do you mean?"

"Where are you going?"

"What does this relay of horses waiting for us here mean?"

Janette asked the questions with the rapidity that only a woman under excitement can.

Before the guide could reply, Kirk Kendrick said:

"It is all right, miss; for these horses were left here for another purpose, and as the guide said he might have to come round this way to avoid the Indians, Surgeon Powell told him to make use of these animals."

"We will halt, Mrs. Powell, for half an hour's rest."

It was the first time that Janette had been addressed by her new name, and she felt her face flush, while the novelty of it took her thoughts from suspicion of danger, and in

fact, the courier's explanation seemed satisfactory.

There was but one man found with the relay of horses in the timber, and he took charge of the tired stock and rode off in a different direction from that taken by the courier and his party.

After a short rest Janette mounted her fresh horse and they started once more at a rapid gallop, keeping the animals well up to their speed and throwing the miles rapidly behind them.

After several hours more of rapid riding, another halt was made, and a second time a relay of horses were found.

This time Janette's suspicions were fully awakened, and she said in an angry voice:

"You must explain this mystery, for we have been going at a run from the fort all this time, and I feel that something is wrong."

Again the cunning of the courier came to his aid, and he said:

"Mrs. Powell, I have to confess, as you demand it; but, the fact is, the Doctor thought you would not leave him if you knew where he wanted you to go."

"What can you mean sir?" asked Janette haughtily.

"You see, Mrs. Powell, the surgeon met Lieutenant Ames and a party of soldiers after he left the ranch, and he said that as Wolf Fang was marching with such a band of warriors down upon the fort, all the officers' wives and children had been sent hastily away toward the old fort, and two relays of horses had been left for you to follow at all speed, and it is there that we are taking you; but Surgeon Powell said you'd be certain to want to remain at the fort or the ranch, and share this danger, unless you were fooled into going where we are taking you."

This story certainly seemed plausible, and with no real reason for doubting the soldiers, as she supposed them to be, Janette said, frankly:

"I thank you, my man, for telling me the truth; but I do prefer to remain at the fort and share the danger with my husband, so you will oblige me by returning there at once."

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Powell, but I dare not disobey orders."

"I will be responsible."

"I am sorry, but I must obey my orders."

Janette gave vent to an impatient exclamation, and then asked:

"How far is it from here that we have to go?"

"About three hours' rapid ride."

"Then start at once."

"You will need rest, Mrs. Powell, for we have now been six hours in the saddle, and ridden full speed a long way."

"I am not fatigued, and this relay of horses are fresh, so push on."

"But it is about dawn, and you might get an hour's rest waiting for breakfast."

"I am not hungry, and in three hours we can get breakfast where we are going."

"I wish to ride on at once."

This settled it, and the tired outlaws were once more compelled to mount, tired out as they were, and follow the seemingly untiring young wife.

As dawn began to break, Janette looked narrowly into the faces of her escort.

First she glanced at the guide ahead, and noticed that he had but one arm, and was a rougher specimen of humanity than she had ever seen about the fort, wild-looking as some of those men are who hang about frontier posts.

Next she looked back at the "soldiers."

They spurred up a little, to appear soldierly, but were a hard-looking set, with long hair, bearded and unkempt faces.

At once her suspicions returned to her, and she turned her eyes full upon the man by her side.

What she saw there seemed to fascinate her, and she asked, after a long survey of his features, which amounted to a stare:

"What is your name?"

"Kendrick, ma'am."

"Ah, yes, so I heard you called."

"Have you been a soldier long?"

"For years," said the man, not liking this scrutiny.

"I knew a man by your name once—Kirk Kendrick—and he was confidential clerk to

my father, Richard Joslyn, and betrayed his trust.

"I was a little girl then, but I never forget a face, and you are Kirk Kendrick!"

"No, no, Mrs. Powell, I beg you not to—"

"Silence, sir! for I know you, and if you betrayed one master you will another, and are dealing wrong with me now."

Without giving a sign of her intention, with the utterance of the last words she suddenly wheeled her horse and darted away like the wind, urging the animal with her riding-whip in one hand, while with the other she had drawn a revolver from her belt, for she had put it on before leaving the ranch.

So sudden had been her move that she had gained a dozen lengths the start before the astonished deserter and his comrades could realize that she had taken flight.

Then Kirk Kendrick cried:

"After her, men!"

Leading the way, he started in pursuit, and an exciting race began.

But Janette had not gone far before she discovered that she was mounted, whether by accident or design she knew not, upon the slowest horse of the lot, and she turned about, determined to keep her pursuers at bay with her revolvers, for she now sat with one in each hand as the outlaws dashed up.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE KIDNAPPED BRIDE.

"Put up them weepins, durn yer, or I uses mine!"

The words were uttered by Dead Knife Jim, the guide of the party who had kidnapped poor Janette, and he drew his own revolver as he spoke, for, seeing the hostile attitude of the young bride, the outlaws had instinctively drawn their weapons.

"Back, all of you! for I will kill the first man that lays a hand on me," cried Janette, and her look showed that she meant every word she uttered.

The outlaws halted, Kirk Kendrick and Dead Knife Jim along with the others, and a circle was formed around her, presenting a strange sight, to see the daring girl at bay in the midst of her male foes.

There was no man present who seemed to care to risk the proving of her words, and they all held aloof.

Thus a moment of painful silence passed, and it was broken by Janette with:

"Now I know you are up to some deviltry against me, and I shall fight for my rights."

"Go your way together, and I will go my way alone."

"You are no more soldiers than I am, though that man may be now, but once was my father's clerk and robbed him, while you are, I believe, the outlaw whom they call Dead Knife Jim," and she looked squarely in the face of the latter personage, who remarked:

"You hes hit ther bull's-eye dead-center on me, missy, fer I are thet indevidooal."

"And you are all outlaws?"

"Yes, miss."

"Of the Red Angel band?"

"Sart'in."

"And have played this bold game of pretended soldiers to get possession of me?" asked Janette, without a quiver in her voice.

"You've got us down fine, miss," answered Dead Knife Jim, who became spokesman for the party.

"And is that man the instigator, to seek revenge on me, on account of my father, who dismissed him from his service?" and she pointed to Kirk Kendrick, whose face flushed and then paled at her words.

"No, miss; you is off ther trail thar, fer he are only actin' fer ther chief, an' as I understand's it, you has been kidnapped ter be held fer a big pile o' dust, which them as loves yer will hev ter pay fer yer."

"Don't you git scart, fer thet are all, an' my idee is ther sooner ther dust is put up, ther sooner you gits free."

Janette gave a sigh of relief, and then asked:

"What price do you demand?"

"It are fer ther chief to decide, miss."

"I have some money, and can send one of your men with an order, which—"

"No, miss; we must leave it fer ther chief ter decide."

"Captain Hyena?"

"We calls him Cap'n Kit, miss."

"The other name suits him best; but where is he?"

"We'll take yer ter whar he are, or will be soon."

"I suppose I must submit."

"Yes, miss, fer we kin jist keep around yer an' not let yer git away."

"Very well, lead on as before and I will follow; but you, sir, ride back with your brother cut-throats," and she looked with scorn upon Kirk Kendrick, who slowly fell back to a position behind her, while Dead Knife Jim led the way. As before, and Janette followed close after him, as he went off on the same sweeping gallop they had kept up through the night.

As though she had made up her mind to face the worst, Janette did not speak any more on the long ride.

After an hour's gallop the prairie became broken, and further on hill-land was before them, with higher hills, heavily wooded, and presenting the appearance of a rough country in the distance.

The sun was well up in the skies when the party at last entered a canyon, that, having an upward slope, brought them into the heart of the hills.

Janette looked about her with interest, as Dead Knife Jim halted before a rude, but stout cabin, built under the brow of an overhanging hill, and at the termination of a canyon whose high sides were unscalable.

"Here, miss, is the place the chief told us to bring yer, an' you'll find ther cabin comfortable, though it hain't ther major's ranch, as you can see."

"Who dwells here?"

"Nobody lives here now, miss; but it us'ter be ther cap'n's home, I b'lieves, an' its furnitur' are hid away in ther hills, but we'll soon fetch that fer yer."

"And you and your men will remain here, too?"

"We has orders ter camp here, miss, across ther canyon, an' thar is tepees fer us hid up in ther timber, fer we hes been here afore, and thet cabing are whar ther chief put up."

Janette said no more, but dropped down upon a board seat in front of the cabin.

The place was desolate in the extreme, though surrounded by a few stunted trees; but the view of the canyon, off over the country for miles, was a grand one.

Looking about her, as the men departed, all but two who remained as a guard, she sighed heavily, for she could see no manner of escape out of that dismal spot.

The high, precipitous sides of the canyon behind her, with the outlaws camping across its width in front, seemed to present an impassable barrier to escape, for with that thought her mind was already busy.

Soon the men returned bearing a cot, table, a couple of chairs, all of rude workmanship, and a bundle of other things that Dead Knife Jim said—

"Would make things hum with comfort in the cabing."

They also brought their tepees which were pitched some fifty paces below the cabin, entirely blocking up the canyon.

The horses were led into the valley below and staked out, under one man as guard, and one of the outlaws having built a fire began to broil some game and make coffee in a way that tempted the tired and hungry girl to eat with evident relish.

Then she set to work and arranged the cabin as well as she could, and afterward threw herself down to rest, and sunk into a deep sleep, from which she was awakened by the opening of the door.

With a startled cry she sprung to her feet, for before her was Captain Kit, the Red Angel chief.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BRICK THE BRAVO'S STORY.

For an instant, upon awakening from her sound and dreamless sleep after her long ride and loss of rest, Janette was unnerved at the sight of the man before her.

She had seen him once, when he attempted to make her father and herself prisoners, the night he had attacked their train and again when he had tried to capture her when she was with Frank Powell one day, and would have done so but for the act of the self-

sacrificing surgeon, who had forced her to fly on his horse while he stood at bay among the bandits.

Once more she had seen him, when he was in chase of the Surgeon Scout, and had been checked by her and the black cowboys.

Of course there was no mistaking that tall form now, and the face, shielded from the sight of all by the strange mask of red wings.

With form erect and arms folded, he stood before her, while he said in a voice of rare gentleness:

"Pardon me, lady, but I knocked twice, and receiving no answer, entered, fearing you had done yourself some harm, as you had not been seen by my men for some hours."

"Hours! have I been asleep for hours?" she asked, hardly yet in full command over herself.

"It is growing late in the afternoon, lady."

With a haughty toss of her head, Janette said, while her lips curled with scorn:

"You are Captain Hyena, the Overland Bandit, I believe?"

"So men call me, lady," he answered, in the same gentle tones, and with no show of anger.

"And you are the murderer of my father!" she said, almost savagely.

"No, lady, your father died from a wound received in defending his property against my band."

"You were there, sir, for I saw you."

"Oh yes, I do not deny that."

"Then I look upon you as his murderer."

"As you please, lady."

His coolness and gentleness of manner fretted her, and she said, in the same angry manner:

"And I am the prisoner of such a man?"

"So it seems, lady."

"And you have taken me for the gold my ransom will bring you?"

"Is that your opinion, lady?"

"In Heaven's name, what other motive can have been yours?" she cried, anxiously.

"Compose yourself, make yourself at home here, where my negro servant will bring you food, and to-morrow, when you have well rested, we will have a talk together."

"No, what you do I wish done at once."

"I have money, and more will be given if you demand it, so name my ransom and send a messenger to make arrangements with my husband."

"Your husband?"

"Yes, for I am married."

"Married?"

"Yes, I am now Mrs. Powell, the wife of the fort surgeon, who is no man to let this insult to me at your hands go unpunished."

The man stood in silence a moment, and then he said:

"Lady, we will have a talk to-morrow, not before, for there is work for me to do now, and if things go as I expect I will have some one a prisoner here of whom you little dream."

"If you refer to my husband you will find him too well able to take care of himself to become your prisoner."

The chief turned and went to the door.

There he paused, and before he went out said, simply:

"To-morrow, lady, I will see you."

With this he disappeared, and Janette was left alone with her own cruel thoughts.

The cabin was hateful to her, so she walked outside.

The canyon was becoming darkened with the shadows of approaching night, though the sunlight yet gleamed like gold on the hill-tops, and lighted up the country beyond, which was spread out before her like a grand painting.

Near the cabin another tepee had been set up, and before it she saw the black servant of the chief cooking supper.

Brick was a skillful cook, and went about his work with the air of one who knew he had to tempt a fair lady with his supper.

There were a variety of dishes he was preparing, boiled birds, a squirrel, some juicy venison steaks, baked potatoes, which had evidently been taken from some emigrant's wagon, crackers, and, if I must say so, onions, fried and sliced raw.

Then there was coffee that had a delicious

flavor, biscuit, butter, taken from a tub that looked as though it had, like the potatoes, not reached its proper destination, and silver service to eat on, the latter also smacking of highway robbery on the prairies or the burglary of some well-to-do ranchero.

Having extended her walk into the little grove that shaded the end of the canyon, Janette regained her composure, and, determined to take matters coolly and keep up her strength, she watched the huge negro cook as he prepared supper.

All being in readiness the table was brought out, a cloth spread upon it, and a plate laid for one.

This was a relief to the poor girl, for she had feared she would have to eat with the chief as her *vis-a-vis*.

"Supper ready, missy."

"What you hab?—jist say de word an' I help you to eberyting," said Brick.

Janette allowed him to help her bountifully, for, a prairie girl, in spite of her being a captive, she had a frontier appetite.

"Glad missy eat somet'ing; it do her good," said Brick, delighted at her unmistakable praise of his cooking.

"You are a good cook," she said, as she finished her supper.

"Yes, missy, I us't to cook on a Massassip' steamboat in de good ole times."

"Were you a slave then?"

"Yes, missy."

"Then you will sympathize with me in my loss of freedom."

"Missy, it am-just like dis: I did sympathize wid myself, but I c'u'dn't he'p myself, an' I sympathizes wid you an I can't he'p you—see, missy?"

"No, I do not see, for you could help me if you wished."

"No, missy, I do nothing my massa don't tell me."

"Not if I paid you in gold what would have bought you from your master in slavery days?"

"No, missy."

"You are foolish."

"No, missy; if you tells me one de men 'sults you, I kill him for you; but I do nothing my massa don't say I must do."

"You love your master, then?"

"Yas, missy, he am all I keer for."

"How strange," musingly said Janette.

"No, missy; for he do much for me."

"In making you an outlaw and putting your neck in the same noose with his own?"

"If he hang, I kin hang, too, missy; but he done sabe my life one time and I neber forgit him, no, neber."

"He saved your life?"

"Yas, missy."

"How?"

"Two year ago, when I were in de mines, workin' for a leetle gold."

"De miners didn't like me 'cause I was a nigger, an' dey come to my cabing one night to make me gib 'em gold."

"I tole 'em I didn't hab but hundred dollars, an' I gib 'em dat, for dere was seben of 'em, missy; but dey swore dat I hab plenty hid away, and den dey take me an' tie me."

"I beg 'em not to kill me, an dey say I must confess whar my gold was; but as I didn't hab no more I c'u'dn't confess nothing, could I, missy?"

"No; but what then?"

"Dey hangs me up to a tree ontill I were 'most dead."

"The brutes!" indignantly said Janette.

"Yas, missy, so dey was; but den dey let me down, an' still I c'u'dn't confess what I didn't know, an' den dey said dey was goin' ter bury me alive, an' dey makes a coffin ob de boards ob my cabin an' digs a grave."

"Den dey asks me if I would confess; but I c'u'dn't, missy, an' dey put me in de coffin and I gib up all hope, when a gemman come up on horseback an' seen what were goin' on."

"He tole 'em to let me go, and he covered 'em wid his revolvers, missy, an' dey jist hunted de hills mighty quick."

"Den de gemman git down off his horse, an' untie me, an' tell me to come wid him an' he would pectect me."

"And that gentleman was Captain Hyena?" said Janette, with a sneer.

"Yas, missy, it were him, an' I hain't forgit him fer it, nor does I intend ter."

"What time will missy hab breakfast in de mornin'?"

"At any time you please," announced Janette, shortly; and, convinced that she could never bribe Brick to help her, she walked back into the cabin, for night was now settling down.

A few moments after, the negro followed her with a lamp and some books, while he said:

"Massa hab sent you dese, missy."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

REOPENING OLD WOUNDS.

So worn out was Janette that the sun was shining down into the canyon the following morning when she awoke.

Hastily rising, she soon after appeared to the eyes of Brick, who was preparing as sumptuous a breakfast for her as had been her supper.

But Janette was nervous, and did not eat with the same relish, as she could not tell what the coming interview would bring forth, when the chief would have his promised talk with her.

The idea of her being rescued did not enter her mind, for she knew a force large enough to attempt it could not be spared from the fort, and even her husband could not alone take her from the power of so many outlaws.

Then, too, the Red Angels, in changing horses as they had, and sending those that were used up off in a different direction, had certainly confused the trail even for the most skillful trailer, and any one pursuing would just as likely go off on one of these false tracks as to take the one she had come.

To follow her, too, the trail would have to be taken up at the Monkton Ranch, and with no relays of horses, whoever pursued would make slow work of it and be days reaching the canyon, and much longer, if they first struck the false trails of the riderless horses.

So reasoning, it will be seen that Janette had little hope of rescue.

Then, too, she was worried about who it was that would be her fellow-prisoner, and all this prevented her enjoying her breakfast, greatly to Brick's regret.

"Where is your master?" she asked, as she arose from the little table.

"He am down de canyon, missy."

"I see none of the men."

"You would see 'em if you started to walk right off, missy."

"Well, tell your master I am ready to see him now."

"Yes, missy," and Brick went off in search of the chief, while Janette paced nervously to and fro.

But when she saw Captain Hyena approaching she became firm as a rock.

He greeted her in a courteous manner, and said:

"Have you enjoyed your breakfast, lady?"

"Yes, your servant is certainly an excellent cook; but my desire, sir, is to talk with you upon another subject than cooking."

"Ah! about yourself?"

"About my ransom."

"And you wish to know the price I set on you?"

"I do."

The chief was silent a moment, and then said:

"Lady, I have a little revenge to satisfy against you."

"Indeed! how have I wronged you?"

"Let me tell you something of the past, to prove just what you have done."

"I shall be edified in knowing," haughtily returned Janette.

"Lady, were you ever in love?"

"How dare you ask me, a wife, such a question?"

"Be calm, lady, and keep your temper, for by doing so you serve yourself."

"Now kindly answer my question."

"What is it to you, sir?"

"Much."

"Then I have been in love, and am now."

"You refer to your love for Surgeon Powell?"

"Certainly."

"Were you never in love before you met Doctor Powell?"

Janette was seated upon the bench against

the cabin, while Captain Kit had drawn up a chair opposite to her.

At his words her face became crimson, and then, the blood retreating, she became as pale as death, and was on her feet in an instant.

"Be good enough not to excite yourself, madam, but answer my question frankly."

"I will not."

"Then all negotiation ends between us."

Janette bit her lips viciously, and seeing the outlaw about to walk away, she called out:

"One moment!"

"Yes, madam."

"What is it you wish to know?"

"If you never loved before you met Frank Powell?"

"Yes," and the word came out with a snap.

"You are very young, I believe?"

"Yes."

"You look older than you are; but you are about seventeen, are you not?"

"I am," said Janette, with the air of one suffering upon the inquisition, but who had made up her mind to suffer without a moan.

"That love, and this one, I mean your last attachment for Powell, are the two loves of your life, I believe?"

"Yes; but tell me how you knew of that other."

"I will tell you nothing, at least now."

"It is said that a woman can love but once in a certain way."

"Is such true in your case?"

"How do you mean, sir?"

"Measuring your two loves together now, which was the true one?"

Janette looked deeply pained for a full minute before she replied:

"I was hardly in my teens then."

"You were older then than most girls of eighteen, for your heart and brain developed rapidly."

"Did you not love your first lover with all your heart?"

"I did."

"Have you forgotten him?"

"No."

"And this second love; was it as strong as the first?"

"For Heaven's sake, tell me why you make me suffer as you do?" cried Janette in pitiful tones.

"Because I must know all."

"Now tell me, when you met Surgeon Powell, did you not still love that other man?"

"Yes."

"But you believed him lost to you forever?"

"Yes."

"And your admiration for the handsome surgeon, his daring deeds, his brilliant powers of conversation, his mind, his gentle voice and winning manner fascinated you?"

"Yes."

"If it so happened that you never met your first love again, with Surgeon Powell you could have been happy all your life?"

"Yes; I could."

"But you met that old love again and you felt the old passion revive for him."

"Oh, tell me why do you torture me?"

"You must school yourself to bear all, so answer me."

"What shall I answer?"

"When you met your old lover did your heart not go forth to him as of yore?"

"It did, God knows."

"Then why did you not give Powell up?"

"I will tell you why," and Janette spoke rapidly and excitedly.

"It was because I would not wound the great big heart of that noble man, Frank Powell, when I knew that he loved me as few men love."

"I respected him more than all others, and could see that he was as far above my old lover as Paradise is above purgatory, yet I could not forget or cast out the old love, and determined to marry the man I trusted wholly, and make him happy, rather than go back to the other."

"So feeling, I married the one, respecting, honoring him, though analyzing my heart, I loved the other man when I knew, or felt that he was a pigmy alongside of a giant in comparison to Surgeon Frank Powell."

"But you seem to have forgotten one important event of your life."

"What?"

"An event that no woman should ever forget."

"To what do you refer?"

"That you had no right to marry Surgeon Powell."

"No right to do so?"

"Yes."

"And why, pray, if so I chose?"

"Because you were already married," came in cold, cutting tones from the lips of the Red Angel chief.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A REVELATION OF THE PAST.

IN spite of her self-command, at the strange words of the Red Angel captain, Janette uttered a startled cry, and her face paled and flushed by turns.

"What can you mean by saying such a thing of me?" she almost gasped, and then, becoming indignant, she continued:

"How dare you accuse me falsely, sir?"

"Do you deny my assertion?"

"Of course I deny it."

"Be careful, madam."

"I am careful."

"You assert that you were never before married?"

"I do assert it."

"You are Janette Joslyn?"

"I was, I am now Mrs. Powell," she said, proudly.

"Daughter of Richard Joslyn, of H—, a one-time wealthy merchant?"

"Yes."

"And you deny that you have been twice wedded?"

"I do."

"Think back a few years."

"I have but a few years of life to recall, sir."

"Let me remind you of certain things of the past, as your memory seems to be treacherous."

"I defy you to do so."

"Were you not once married to your father's adopted son, Paul?"

"Oh! that is what you refer to as a marriage?"

"Yes."

"It was a play-marriage between Paul and myself, when I was a mere child."

"You are a mere child yet, in the eyes of the law, but you have wedded Surgeon Frank Powell."

"I tell you the other was a mock marriage."

"You think so, madam?"

"I know so."

"Pray tell me the circumstances."

"Well, Paul was wont to call me his little sweetheart, and one day said:

"Let us get married, Janie."

"I consented, as it was a good joke, and got the prayer-book for him to read the service; but he said we would have a grand time of it, and as I was to have a party, with tableaux, it should be then."

"So I changed, with my maid, one of my mother's dresses to fit me, and one of the tableaux was the marriage of Paul and myself."

"Who performed the ceremony?"

"A young man who was a friend of Paul's, and whom I never saw before or after."

"Was there not a license and certificate given?"

"There was some paper gotten up to carry out the joke."

"And you signed your name, as he did his, and then the witnesses put their signatures to the document?"

"I believe so."

"And that was your mock marriage?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken."

"I am not."

"Your father gave the bride away?"

"Yes, to help the tableau."

"It was no mock-marriage, madam."

"Oh! what can you mean?" and Janette looked deeply distressed.

"I mean just this: that Paul's friend was a clerk of the court, who, for a good sum in hand paid, consented to get the license and marriage-certificate, according to law, and the whole ceremony was as legal and binding as the law can make it, your age being against it, it is true; but you are yet only a child."

Janette was astounded, and sat in silence, gazing upon the masked face before her.

"I cannot believe you," she at last said.

"I can give you proof that the marriage was duly entered, and here are papers to substantiate it, and here is your certificate."

He took from his pocket papers of an official-looking nature, and handed them to her.

She looked for a moment as though she meant to destroy them; but he said, as though divining her intention:

"As the record has been made, other papers can be secured if those are destroyed."

"I will not destroy them, sir; but if this is true, how have I not sinned against Surgeon Powell?"

"Never mind him; but think of yourself; for these papers can get you into trouble for marrying a second time."

"But then I did not know that—"

"Ignorance of the law is no excuse, madam; you have committed bigamy, and you must get out of the scrape as best you can."

"Oh, how cruel it was of Paul to deceive me so."

"No, it was not cruel of him, for he idolized you, and did not wish to lose you, so did this to have a claim upon you that would give you to him in after years."

"He loved you, and he sinned against you to win you; so do not blame him for what he did, for he sought you out here on the border to make you his wife before the world; but believing that you loved another, Frank Powell, he suffered in silence."

"And who are you that speak for him?"

"I am his friend, and one who knows how deeply he loved you, and how he has suffered to see you turn to another."

"And you are his friend?"

"I am."

"An outlaw the friend of an honest man?"

"Yes; for he has done me many a favor, and I have helped him before I was what I am."

"When did you see him last?"

"A half-hour ago."

Janette started and cried:

"He is here, do you mean?"

"I do."

"Where?"

"Down the canyon among my men."

"Let me go to him."

"No. I will send him to you."

"Why is he here?"

"As my prisoner," was the cool reply, and Janette gave a moan of anguish and buried her face in her hands.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE OUTLAW'S ULTIMATUM.

"Your prisoner?" at last said Janette

"Yes."

"And yet you say that you are his friend."

"I am."

"This is a strange paradox."

"Let me explain it."

"As my friend I wished to serve him, and to do so I have to be seemingly harsh toward him."

"Knowing as I did, for I was in the past his confidant, of his marriage to you, and seeing him suffer calmly and in silence while another claimed his wife as a lady-love, I determined to aid him."

"Against your father I had a grudge, but it matters not to you what it was, and to reap revenge I allowed you to marry Powell, that is to commit bigamy, before I acted."

"Then I made you captive, and also took your real husband a prisoner, too."

"This allowing you to marry Surgeon Powell was also a blow of my revenge against him."

"Now I have you in my power, and I have your husband also, and you can both gain your liberty in but one way."

"And what way is that?"

"That you shall cast Frank Powell aside, to the dogs as it were, and acknowledge yourself the wife of Paul Monkton."

"If what you say is true, about the legality of my first marriage—"

"You have the papers, judge for yourself," interrupted the man.

She carefully glanced over the papers and then said:

"I cannot doubt them as proof, and so must acknowledge myself the wife of Paul."

"Will it not be a pleasure for you to do so?"

"Understand me, as you seem to have done."

"I love Paul with all my heart, and were it not for the deep pain I give Surgeon Powell, I would gladly claim him as my husband, if he asked it."

"But he was weak, showing himself foolishly so, to stand by and see me wedded to another, while he held a claim upon me."

"He was too generous to make you unhappy, as he believed he would, and, with his affection for Surgeon Powell that of a brother, he would not pain him, and so allowed the early marriage to stand as a mock one, consenting to suffer in silence."

"But this I would not consent to, and hence I have acted as I did, determined to bring the true husband and wife together."

"But what can I do about Surgeon Powell?"

"Curse him! let him go."

"No, no, he deserves some word of explanation at my hands."

"Do not fret about him."

"Then I shall fret about myself, for he shall not believe that I willfully deserted him, and, before I return to Paul's ranch, I wish to have him know all, and so shall write him at once."

"You may write him if so it pleases you, and I will see that he gets the letter; but you are not to return to your husband's ranch."

"Do you mean this?"

"Certainly, for I have had a talk with Paul, and he says that it would be painful for him to go back where he would meet Powell, and that you would feel as he does, so that he will start soon for Colorado, where he has some mining interests, and will build up a new home there."

"It may be better so," said Janette, sadly.

"I know that it will be, and you can remain here a few days, while I release Paul to go back, sell his ranch, and fix up his affairs."

"And they will ask him about me?"

"No, for the letter you write will not be delivered until after Paul returns, and he will of course be supposed to know nothing about you."

"I will do what is right; but it gives me deep pain to feel that I wronged that noble man, though I did so, Heaven knows, unintentionally."

"Let me see Paul, and then we will decide; but one thing is certain."

"Well?" he asked, as Janette set her teeth firmly.

"We will go far away from the baleful atmosphere of your presence, for, with you, the murderer of my father, and the vile wretch I know you to be, as the friend of my husband, he can never prosper in the world—never! never! never!"

"As you please, madam," was the cold reply.

Then Janette asked quickly:

"Why will you not allow me to return myself, that I may tell dear old Major Monkton and my—my—I mean Surgeon Powell, that it was not an intentional sin on my part to do as I have done?"

"No, you must remain here a prisoner, and with you as a hostage, your husband will be certain to return."

"This is my ultimatum, Mrs. Paul Monkton."

"Send Paul here, for I can but accept the situation," sadly said the young wife; and with one of his courtly bows the outlaw chief departed from the cabin, leaving Janette to brood over all that had transpired.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE OUTLAW FIEND.

"PAUL!"

"Janie!"

Each uttered the name of the other, as the young ranchero, Paul Monkton, entered the cabin, where Janette sat upon her cot, buried in deep reverie, painful yet pleasurable.

She was pained, yes, deeply grieved to feel that she had unwittingly deceived Frank Powell, for, so little impression had her first marriage, as she believed a mock one, made upon her, that she hardly remembered the circumstance.

But she knew, when all the facts were brought before her, that she had really been married, for even then she was nothing more

than a girl in years, and had yet wedded with "her own free will and consent" the post surgeon.

She had loved Paul devotedly, and in fact still did so, and had sighed to feel that he was not to be to her what the surgeon would be; but then her affection for Frank Powell was deep, her gratitude strong, and believing that Paul did not love her other than he would a sister, she had given him up with less regret than she otherwise might have shown.

Who this mysterious outlaw was that had brought her there and called himself Paul's friend, she could not imagine.

But she hated him with an absolutely holy hatred, and she was glad when he left her sight.

Looking grandly handsome, the young ranchero came into the cabin and drew Janette to him, while he said softly:

"How strange all this is, Janette!"

"Strange, indeed, Paul," she murmured.

"You will forgive me, then, for using deceit in our marriage, as I did it because I loved you so?"

"Yet, you allowed me to marry another."

"Yes, because I believed that you loved him far more than you did me, and it was my affection for you that prompted me to yield you to him, while I also admired him so much that I hated to pain his great heart, and was content to be the sufferer myself."

"I cannot but believe it was noble of you, Paul; but you made me commit a great sin."

"Forgive me, darling."

"I will forgive, but I cannot forget the wrong I did poor Frank Powell."

"But, Paul, tell me about this strange man."

"Frank Powell is indeed a strange man, and—"

"No, no; I do not mean Surgeon Powell, but this outlaw, this murderer, this fiend, Captain Hyena, and all that is bad, naught that is good."

"You are savage against him, Janie."

"I look upon him as the murderer of my poor father, Paul."

"Well, Janie, I will not defend him; but in other days he was a true friend to me, and as I owe him my life, and far more, I cannot condemn him to his fate."

"Knowing just what you were to me, for I told him years ago, he very kindly determined to thwart Powell, whom he hates, and unite us."

"He plotted to this end, captured you, and then as cleverly got me into his power, and I found, when I expected death, that I was to have life and my Janette."

"Now, Janie, he wishes me to leave here, or rather my ranch, and take you far away from the field of his operations, and he gives me permission to return to my ranch, arrange my affairs, and then I can return here for you, and we can seek a home in Colorado, where I have a mine, and we can be happy."

"By the way, do you know what your father did about his Colorado mine?"

"Nothing whatever, for he never had much faith in it, and I have the papers about it in my little sachel at Major Monkton's."

"It may turn out a bonanza—who knows?—for mining property is going up in Colorado."

"But I must get away, for the sooner the better, and I will be back before many days to claim my little wife, and what a jolly time we will have on our way to our new home!"

"I do wish I could go with you, Paul."

"That the chief will not permit for some reason of his own."

"I think he fears that you would give me the slip and run off with that handsome surgeon."

"Oh, Paul! when I am your wife?"

"You thought you were Powell's wife yesterday; but you remain here, little one, until my return."

"This is but a prison."

"Yes; but Brick will take care of you and feed you as though you were a Christmas turkey, and you will neither see the chief or his men, and be allowed the freedom of the canyon."

"But do not attempt to leave the canyon,

for the outlaws are a wild set and might harm you."

"I will be prudent, Paul; but do come back as soon as you can, for the days will be wretched ones to me while you are gone."

A parting kiss and the young ranchero had gone, his face bright with hope for the future, of happiness thrown in his way by Captain Kit, his outlaw friend.

CHAPTER XL.

HOW THE BLOW FELL.

WORDS are inadequate to portray the scenes at the fort when it became known that Frank Powell had been robbed of his bride of an hour.

Riding at full speed, when summoned by Kendrick, the courier, he had arrived at the fort, never doubting that the man had told the truth.

Superbly mounted, he had outstripped Night Hawk, the officer and chaplain, and dashed into the fort, his horse white with foam and panting like a hound.

"Great God, Powell! what has happened?" cried Major Benteen, who was just about to retire, but looked out at the clatter of hoofs.

"How is the captain, sir?"

"I hope he still lives?" said Frank Powell, earnestly.

"What captain? Who still lives?"

"Captain Burt, sir, whom I was sent for to attend, and nearly rode my horse to death, as the courier said he was fearfully wounded."

"Powell, I know no more what you are talking about than the man in the moon."

"Sir?"

"Are you married?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it has turned your head."

"Major Benteen, I am no man to joke upon a serious subject."

"I was sent for, sir, to attend Captain Burt, whom Kendrick, the courier, told me was dangerously wounded."

"I had only been married a short while, but came on at once."

"Forgive me, Powell; but there is something wrong here, for Burt left my quarters, as well as I am, not half an hour ago, and Kendrick deserted the post to-day, for some unaccountable reason."

"Good God! my life I stake on it, that this is that Hyena's work."

"I will at once return to the ranch, sir."

"And Burt and his company shall go with you, for this needs looking into," and in fifteen minutes after, Frank Powell, with livid face and set teeth, and mounted upon a fresh horse, was dashing along on his way back to Monkton Ranch.

Upon one side of him was Night Hawk also freshly mounted, and on the other Captain Burt, and the three rode on in silence, while behind them came thirty troopers, the clashing of steel keeping up an accompaniment to the thud of the many hoofs upon the prairie sod.

Arriving at the ranch, they found Major Monkton abed, but he was quickly aroused and told how the courier had returned with a party of soldiers after Janette, and shortly after his nephew had decided that it was best for him to go home, and had also departed.

This was all that the major knew, and then the men sat in the parlor talking over the strange affair, for nothing could be done until the morning, when the trail could be read by the scouts.

Outside the soldiers went into a bivouac, and within the cabin the major and his guests talked through the night, while Frank Powell, his handsome face grown cold and stern, paced to and fro, his heart on fire, his brain in a whirl of excitement, though outwardly he was perfectly calm.

With the first glimmer of dawn, Frank Powell and Night Hawk set to work, and all knew that no two better trailers and readers of prairie signs could be put upon the track of those who had committed the outrage which the darkness of night had shielded.

The spot where the pretended soldiers had lain in wait until the courier first went alone to the ranch, was found, and then his track from the trail to the fort over to join them, when his horse was temporarily lamed by the string tied about his leg.

Then the course taken by the kidnappers,

with the well-known hoof-tracks in their midst of Janette's spotted pony.

This was of course the trail to follow, and after breakfast they were about to mount and dash off on it, when a cowboy arrived from up the river, stating that the Indians had appeared in force and captured Paul Monkton, before he reached his ranch.

"Take the larger number of your men, Captain Burt, and try and rescue that gallant young fellow, and with the balance I will follow this trail, for I am confident it will lead me to where they hold Janette a prisoner."

This advice was about to be followed when a young officer, accompanied by two of the fort scouts dashed up with word for the soldiers to return at once to the fort, as Wolf Fang was marching against it with half a thousand warriors.

"Powell, in God's name, what is to be done?" said Captain Burt.

"I am a soldier, captain, and shall obey orders."

"But your poor wife?"

"Yes, she is in the power of those wretches, but personal griefs and considerations must yield before official duties, and I shall return with you to the fort, where my services will be sorely needed, if there is a fight with the Indians."

"Come, let us return at once, for the summons is urgent," and Frank Powell rode to the front, the admiration of every one for his noble sense of duty, while every heart bled for him in his poignant sorrow.

The report of the capture of the young ranchero by Indians was false, as the reader knows; but then that story was one of Captain Kit's strokes in the great blow he was giving.

But the report of the advance of Wolf Fang and his warriors was true, and the cavalry squadron had to cut their way through the Indian forces to reach the fort.

When they did so it was found that two soldiers had fallen and several had received wounds.

Then the cry arose that Night Hawk, the scout, was missing.

At the words Frank Powell wheeled like a madman and dashed back over the field.

In terror the Indians fled from his path, though showers of arrows were sent after him, while his revolvers rattled forth continual death-knells as he rode along.

On the field he beheld the bodies of two soldiers, their heads scalped, but nowhere was the scout visible.

Wheeling again, the daring man started back to the fort, while the red-skins rushed to head him off.

But the fort cannon opened upon them, spreading death in their ranks, and sending them flying to safety from the fearful "horse guns," as they called artillery, and Frank Powell rode back into the stockade walls, amid the cheers of the soldiers, with not a wound upon him.

"Can they have captured your brother, Powell, and reserved him for torture?" asked Major Benteen, anxiously.

"No, major, George is safe, I am sure, and purposely dropped out when we charged for the fort, for he has seen some work to do outside," was the answer of the Surgeon Scout, whose heart was relieved that he did not have a brother as well as a wife to sorrow for.

CHAPTER XL.

NIGHT HAWK'S RETURN.

WHEN Surgeon Powell saw the fear with which the artillery inspired the Indians, he suggested to Major Benteen, after asking his pardon for the liberty of doing so, the advisability of sending the guns out at once to the attack, supported by a large force of cavalry.

The suggestion was acted upon so promptly, that in a few minutes the artillerymen were manning their guns upon the open prairie, charging with them, firing, and again charging.

The effect was demoralizing in the extreme upon the red-skins, who sought safety in the nearest timber with an alacrity that five times the force in men, without the guns, could not have made them show.

But the soldiers followed them, and when the shells began to tear through the trees, bursting here and there with damage to the

braves and their ponies, they became seized with a panic, and hastened to decamp at full speed.

Back to the fort then went the triumphant artillerymen, while the cavalry pursued the red-skins who, disappointed at not being able to capture the fort, as they hoped to do, determined to raid the ranches.

But the rancheros were already on the war-path, and a large force of cowboys, under the command of Major Monkton, met the flying Indians and brought them to a stand, while the soldiers coming up, a severe battle was begun.

Sending back to the fort for reinforcements, Major Benteen marshaled his soldiers, scouts and the cowboys in line of battle and began to press his red enemies with all his might.

But Wolf Fang was a good general—kept his braves well together, and though retreating, carried off his dead and wounded, and would not be driven at a greater speed than he found it safe to go.

Night coming on, the running fight was still kept up, Major Benteen halting a part of his force at a time for rest and food, and then bringing them to the front while others rested.

Only the Indian nature, inured to hardships, fatigue and danger, could have stood this terrible strain upon Wolf Fang and his braves.

But stand it they did, and when the morning came, only the red stains upon the ground here and there, with a dead pony now and then, showed that the braves had suffered from the soldiers' fire; for the slain and wounded were borne off with their retreating comrades.

With their superior force, Major Benteen dared not press them into the hill land, so at last gave the order to march back to the fort, knowing that the enemy had been too badly punished to follow.

The next morning they arrived at the fort, and Frank Powell had work enough to do to take his thoughts off of his own sorrows.

But he seemed sleepless and tireless in his duties, and nothing could force him to seek rest; for there were a number who had been wounded with arrows which developed into bad wounds, and he said they needed his constant care.

Thus several days passed away, and then there came an important arrival at the fort in no less a personage than Paul Monkton, the young ranchero.

His story was soon told, and a story it was, for he could not tell the truth under the circumstances, and stated that he had been captured by the Indians and had managed to make his escape.

Coming back by his ranch he found that a small band of Indians, in their retreat, had burned it and driven off his cattle, while his cowboys had scattered, so that he intended to leave that part of the country.

He showed considerable feeling when told about the kidnapping of Janette, and offered to join the surgeon in an attempt to rescue her.

But Frank Powell said:

"I thank you, Monkton, but I must wait awhile, as my duties tie me here."

"But some day I shall take the trail of Janette's kidnappers, and I shall follow it to the death."

"Major Benteen has offered to send a force with me to search for her; but strategy, not force, must rescue her, and I believe she is only held for ransom, and will be well treated."

"If not, then woe be unto those who had a hand in her carrying off, for I have sent in my resignation, and I shall follow them to the grave, be it their grave or mine."

The suppressed voice of the Surgeon Scout showed how deeply he felt; while his eyes almost glared in the intensity of his hatred for those who had stolen from him his bride.

Paul Monkton saw this and muttered:

"He is determined to kill Captain Kit, that is certain, and he is just the man to do it, so Captain Kit must look out."

When asked why he did not remain on the ranch with his uncle, who was getting old and needed aid and companionship, Paul Monkton said he would often visit him, but that he had some mines in Colorado that demanded his attention, and as his ranch had

been burned, he would take that opportunity of looking after his mining interests.

That afternoon he departed from the fort, followed by the good wishes of all, for he was a general favorite, and promising to return before long to find out what had been the fate of poor Janette.

Hardly had Paul Monkton gotten out of sight, when a shout arose that Night Hawk was coming across the prairie.

Soon all not on duty were assembled to greet him, for 'most every one at the fort had believed him dead or a prisoner.

Waving his hat to the salutations given him, Night Hawk grasped his brother's hand, and said:

"Come with me to the major's quarters, Frank."

Major Benteen was found reading and enjoying a cigar together, and he warmly welcomed the scout with:

"Glad to see you safely back again, Powell; but what have you been doing all these days to cause us all such anxiety about you?"

"I will tell you, sir, and must beg you to pardon my going off without orders."

"But when I saw the Indians surrounding the fort, I felt that it would be impossible to get out, should I ever go in, and I therefore dropped back and let the others ride on."

"But your motive, Night Hawk?"

"First, sir, to ride to Fort Morgan and state how you were situated here—"

"Ah! that accounts for the message from Colonel Royal that he would send me troops at once; but I sent a courier back to say I did not need them."

"You did well, Powell, for it threatened to be a serious affair for us, and all along the border; but the truth is General Wolf Fang did not have warriors enough to do the work he so well planned, and besides, your brother tells me that the small-pox carried off many of the tribe's best warriors and renegade chiefs."

"Had there been several hundred more of them, there might be a different story to tell now, and we would have needed all the aid Colonel Royal could send us."

"Well, Major Benteen, I am glad I did not do so wrong in going without orders; but I must confess to another motive too in not coming into the fort other than the one alluded to."

"And what was that, Night Hawk?"

"I observed that Frank allowed duty to call him here, when he knew that his wife was in the hands of the Red Angels, and I determined to follow their trail to where it was fresh."

"Right you were again, Powell," cried the major, while the Surgeon Scout said in a low tone:

"God bless you, George."

"And the result, Night Hawk?" asked Major Benteen.

"I had observed that where we left the trail the kidnappers were moving southwest, and therefore Colorado was doubtless their destination, so, after seeing Colonel Royal, I took a cut across, to see if I would run upon any trail."

"I did so, and there were just the number of horses we had noticed among the kidnappers; but the spotted pony's track was not among the others."

"Still, I thought that in a plot so well planned as that one was, a relay of horses must have been waiting, and I decided to follow the trail, which I did."

"Bravo for you, Night Hawk," exclaimed the major with enthusiasm; but Frank Powell remained silent, and George resumed:

"It was not very long before I came to where the trail had been strangely divided."

"One horse had been suddenly wheeled off to the right, it seemed, and then the others had followed, and, after a short run, this same single track I noticed had halted at one single place, when the others had formed a circle around it."

"From here the tracks led back to the original trail, and it looked to me as though an escape had been attempted."

"You read prairie signs, Powell, as an astronomer does the heavens; but pray continue," said Major Benteen.

"Following the trail, I came into the hill-land, and saw where another trail, numbering one more horse, had joined the one I was on."

"Further on the same thing occurred, an equal number of tracks as the last one forming the trail, and among them *was the track of Janette's spotted pony.*"

"I knew it, George, my brave brother, that you would run those devils to earth," said Frank Powell in a voice that quivered, while Major Benteen cried:

"Powell, you are a man of men; but what then?"

"These trails, sir, showed me that I was on the right track, and that the additional ones were the tracks of two relays of horses, which had gone off from the changing place on different courses, to confuse pursuers."

"Following this broad trail into the hills, I tracked it until night and then camped."

"I built no fire, and as I was wrapping my blanket about me, I saw the glimmer of a light."

"On foot I went toward it, and after great trouble found that it was the reflection on the side of a canyon, cast by camp-fires below."

"Creeping nearer, I discovered the kidnappers camped in the canyon, and apparently safe in their retreat."

"Making this discovery, I went back to my tired horse, and pressed on here as rapidly as he could bring me, to let Frank know just what I had found out."

"If you say so, George, and the major will spare you, we will start to-night," said the surgeon.

"I will spare him with pleasure, Powell, and you can have what men you need, too."

"No, thank you, Major Benteen, George and I will go alone, unless my brother Will, whom I sent a scout after, arrives in time to accompany us."

"Who slanders Will Powell?" cried the cheery voice of that handsome young ranchero, as he stepped into the open door, having evidently just ridden into the fort, for he did not present his usual neat appearance, but was travel-stained and tired-looking.

CHAPTER XLII.

BRONCHO BILL HAS SOMETHING TO SAY.

"I'm here, Frank, to speak for myself, and I've news for you, I guess."

"I trust it is good news, Mr. Powell, for your brother has certainly had sorrow enough of late," said Major Benteen.

"I should judge so, major, from what I discovered on my way here."

"You see, Frank, I could not come to your wedding, as mother was ill; but she rallied quickly, and so I concluded to come up and congratulate the happy pair, and it was upon my way here that I made the discovery I spoke of, and which I knew had brought sorrow upon you."

"I lost my bride, Will, as soon as I got her," said the surgeon sadly.

"Yes, and I found her."

"You!" exclaimed the three listeners in a chorus.

"Yes; she is in the clutches of that Satan's cub, Captain Hyena."

"Yes, he kidnapped her from the ranch, by one of the most clever plots I ever heard of, and we were following his trail when Wolf Fang and his warriors brought us here to defend the fort, and my duty to the wounded has since kept me here; but George has also discovered the lair of this outlawed serpent, and thither we were to start to-night."

"Good! count me in of course, Frank; but did you trail them to the Canyon Hills, George?"

"Yes, and discovered their camp in a large canyon."

"The very place; when were you there?"

"I left last night."

"And so did I."

"You have been on their trail, too, Will," said the surgeon.

"I will tell you how it was, Frank."

"As I told you, I was coming up to see you, when I got on the chase of a band of elk and followed them a long way out of my trail, hoping to get one fellow that had the grandest horns I ever saw."

"At last I brought the fellow down in a little copse of timber, and was busy looking after my horns, when something caused me to look up, and I saw two horsemen almost upon me."

"They both had their weapons drawn, and had taken advantage of my being at work to ride almost upon me."

"The moment I saw them I threw myself down behind the body of the elk, just as their revolvers cracked."

"One of the bullets went through my hat, as you see, and the other knocked the knife from my hand; but I had already gotten my grip upon my revolver-butt and fired, as they rode upon me."

"One of the men I made wolf-meat of at once, and I killed the other's horse; but the rascal was as nimble as a cat, caught on his feet and had thrown himself upon the horse belonging to his pard before I could get a second shot at him; for there were trees here and there, and I had to get to my feet, and then start toward him."

"Lord bless you, he did not tarry to fight it out or mourn for his pard, but just went off like a shot."

"My horse was tired and unsaddled, so I concluded not to follow him, but to investigate the one who had remained."

"He was one of the Red Angel band, and he had about his clothes his little buckskin bag of gold, and some good weapons, which I also brought with me."

"Tied to the back of the dead horse was an antelope and some other game, so I judged the fellows must have a camp near, and were out hunting when they found me."

"Well, I got my horns and hid them in the branches of a tree, and, after taking something to eat, I concluded I'd perform the funeral rites for the dead outlaw, for, major, I feel no hatred for the dead, no matter what he may have been in life."

"When I had put him in a grave, I decided to follow on the trail of his pard, and did so until night, when I camped, determined to keep on in the morning, for I was interested in knowing what he was doing in that part of the country."

"The next day I discovered the villain's nest in a canyon, and there were eight more with him, for I climbed to the top of the hills and looked down upon them."

"Nor was this all, for there was a cabin there, a tepee near it, with several more across the canyon, which came to an end just beyond the little hut."

"Anxious to know more, I clung to my hiding-place, and I tell you it gave me a start that caused me to nearly let go my hold on the tree and drop, when I saw none other than Janette walk out of the cabin."

"She was not bound then?" asked Frank Powell quickly.

"No need to be, there, Frank, for unless she was a bird, she could not escape from that canyon, except by going by the tepees where the men were."

"How many of them in all?"

"I counted nine, with the man who had deserted me and his dead pard in such haste."

"Did you see the chief?"

"No, but I judged that the tepee near the cabin was his lay-out; but yes, there was one other there, and that was the huge negro servant of the Hyena."

"I concluded to wait until dark, after I saw Janette, and did so, and up the canyon came the negro, his arms full of wood."

"He built a fire and then cooked a supper, the smell of which made me feel as though I was starving."

"And Janette?"

"The supper was for her, Frank, and she watched the negro cooking it, and then ate as though she was hungry."

"Then, as it was dark, she went into the cabin, the negro lighting a lamp for her at the fire, and I was in hopes it would burst and blow his head off; but no such good luck."

"I waited until that darky made me sick, eating so much, for he fell to like a hungry hound, after Janette left, and, as far as I could see, he left nothing for breakfast."

"But as I had lost my lariat in my chase of the elk, and had no means of getting down into the canyon, I concluded to come on here and tell you just what I had seen; but if I had had a couple of lassoes, I would have lowered myself down into the canyon, and it can be done, Frank."

"Indeed it can, Will, and if we are discovered, I guess those nine Red Angels, and that black bravado thrown in, will find the

Powell pards a match for them when brought to bay."

"Come, let us get off at once," and Frank Powell rose, his face flushed with excitement and hope.

But he was urged to go slow, to seek the rest which he and his brothers greatly needed, and to leave the fort a short while before dawn, which would bring them to the outlaw's retreat about night, when Broncho Bill could act as guide to the spot where he had made his important discoveries.

This advice Frank Powell was guided by, and for the first time in days he lay down to rest, and sunk into a refreshing, dreamless sleep which lasted for hours.

Before dawn he was awakened by Major Benteen himself, who said:

"Powell, my dear fellow, your brothers are all ready, and your breakfast awaits."

"Good-by, and Heaven grant you success."

Half an hour after, the three brothers, well-named the Wizard Three, rode out of the fort on their mission to rescue Janette, the stolen bride.

CHAPTER XLIII.

WELL-MET.

It was drawing toward the close of day, and, having ridden steadily, with but two halts for rest, the Wizard Trio allowed their horses to go at a slow gait, while they humanely dismounted and walked on ahead to relieve the animals of their weight, and at the same time not lose time by a halt.

Will Powell had said that two hours more would bring them to the hills, from whence a short distance on foot would take them to the spot from whence they could look down into the canyon.

As they neared the foot-hills, the quick eyes of the Trio fell simultaneously upon an object moving in the timber.

"It is a horseman," said Broncho Bill.

"Yes; and an outlaw, for no one else would be here."

"Shall we press on, Frank, and attempt his capture?—for if we are discovered it will destroy all," remarked Night Hawk.

But Frank Powell did not immediately reply, for he had taken his field-glass from its case and turned it upon the timber.

"Come on, for there is but one man there, and I know him," he said.

"Who is it, Frank?"

"It is a gentleman by the name of Dead Knife Jim, George."

"Ah! the outlaw?"

"Yes."

"And his pards may be at his back?"

"I think not, for he is closely observing us."

And on the party moved again until they were near their timber, when they mounted their horses once more, and prepared to greet foes, if foes should be there.

Dead Knife Jim had retired into the timber a short distance, and was not visible; but his horse was, so that convinced the Trio that he had not run off.

As they entered the timber a voice bailed them with:

"Halt, thar!"

"Ay, ay, Jim," called out the surgeon, drawing rein, and motioning to his brothers to do likewise.

"Does yer come as friends, or on ther fight, Pard Doc?"

"Friends to you, Jim, but foes to your band unto death."

"Then that are ther music I wants to hear, Pard Doc, an' here I are, one hand up," and with his single hand raised above his head, the outlaw stepped out from behind the tree that had sheltered him.

Instantly the Trio rode forward and dismounted, and Dead Knife Jim half extended his hand, as he said:

"Does yer fear ter take my hand in friendship? Pard Doc, 'cause it are the grip of a renegade?"

"No, Jim, I take your hand as a friend, for you have proven such to me."

"And you did ther same fer me, Doc, an' don't you forget it; I hain't forgot it."

"You have a good memory, Jim, so perhaps you have seen these gentlemen before?"

"Now, hain't I, an' no mistake, an' I

never 'spected ter be this near 'em unless we was fightin' like kittens an' pups."

"You know us then?" said Broncho Will, with a light laugh.

"I knows you, pard, as the best rider I ever seen back horse-flesh, ther king o' lariat-throwers, an' no mean shakes as a dead shot, while yer has ther pluck o' a whole regiment o' sojers."

"Thank you; but now tell me what you think of this gentleman," and Will Powell laid his hand on Night Hawk's shoulder.

"I think he are like you fer narve, kin trail a cayote, an' thet you is three of a kind, an' kin trump arry game ever put up ag'in' yer; but, Doc, I were a-goin' ter hunt for yer."

"For me, Jim?"

"Yas, fer I wanted ter see yer as much as I wanted a drink, an' thet are awful bad."

"You have struck a temperance crowd this time, Jim Dead Knife."

"Not that we belong to the great Society of Immortal Water-tanks, but then we do not drink from habit," said Broncho Bill.

"So I has heerd, an' I guess you is happier fer it."

"I were a respectable citizen on'st, but I got some Purgatory juice inter me an' it made me a whole Satan, an' when I come to my senses I were ahind iron bars with ninety-nine chances in a hundred o' bein' hanged three times, fer thet were the number I made cold meat of."

"But I lighted out o' jail one rainy night, an' I hasn't been back thar ter see ef they misses me at home, an' I hain't goin'."

"No, licker are only good ter make a coward fight, an' them as don't know how to handle it, an' hain't cowards, with no fightin' ter do, sh'u'd let it alone."

"You are right, Jim; but tell me why you were going to see me?" asked Doctor Powell, who felt that the outlaw had something important to communicate.

"I has that to tell you, Doc, as will surprise you."

"You will find me most willing to listen, Jim, but tell me, is it about my wife?"

"It are."

"Is she safe?" asked the surgeon, quickly.

"She are."

"No harm has befallen her, then?"

"She are a prisoner."

"I know that, Jim; but now let me know what it is that you have to tell me."

"Waal, let us go up inter ther hills a leetle further, fer some o' ther boys is out huntin', and might come round by here."

"Thar we kin talk," and Dead Knife Jim led the way to a secluded spot in the hills, where he halted, and after staking his horse out to feed, sat down upon a log.

The Trio followed his example, and the Surgeon Scout said:

"Now, Jim, tell me all, for I know that you have much to tell, and in this affair, as in others, have been my friend."

"I is your friend, Doc, an' I has thet ter tell yer as will prove it," was the earnest response of the strange man.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A STRANGE STORY.

FOR some moments after his last remark, Dead Knife Jim sat in silence.

Then he said, abruptly:

"Pard Doc, ef I c'u'd hev know'd what ther masked faced fiend were up ter, he'd hev never got ther leddy."

"I believe you, Jim."

"But yer see, he works as sly as a coyote, an' hed ther trap ready ter spring afore I could catch on."

"Yer knows thet courier at ther fort?"

"Kendrick?"

"That's him."

"What of him?"

"Waal, ther chief know'd him afore, an' no good o' him at that, fer he made him desart ther army ter help him."

"An' more, ther deserter stole saddles, bridles an' uniforms an' sich, fer some o' our outlaw galoots ter play sojer in, an', oh, Lordy! it made me git onto my hind legs an' howl with fun when I seen them fellers when daylight broke on 'em."

"Doc, you sh'u'd hev seen 'em."

"They looked well enough at night; but

when ther sunlight tuned 'em up they didn't dasn't look at each other fer fear they'd die o' fright, they looked so fierce in the'r sojer clo'es."

"But, bad as they was, ther courier worked ther racket with 'em ter git ther leddy out o' ther ranch."

"We fooled her along until we changed horses three times, by tellin' her yer wanted her ter come round thet way ter git cl'ar o' ther Injuns; but when daylight come an' she seen ther sojers, she jist tained her horse out o' line an' made a run fer it."

"But ther critter were slow, an' we caught her, in course, an' she concluded to go on when I told her gold-dust were what ther chief wanted."

"That is just as you described the trails, George; the three changes of horses, the running off of one, and the going back to the same route."

"You read those signs perfectly," said Frank Powell, and his brother looked pleased at the praise given him.

Resuming, Dead Knife Jim said:

"Waal, we carried her to ther old retreat o' ther cap'n, an' camped thar."

"It are a canyon, running back inter ther hills, with ther rear endin' in high sides thet nothin' c'u'd climb up, an' nigh onto a hundred feet high."

"Thar be a cabin thar which ther cap'n says he builded when he were prospectin' fer gold thar, but didn't find."

"We hed some furnitur', blankets, cookin'-fixin's, tepees an' sich like *cached* up in ther hills, an' we made ther leddy comfortable as possible."

"But where was Captain Hyena?"

"He didn't put in an appearance at fu'st, Doctor pard, yer see."

"Is he ther now?"

"No, pard; an' ther deserter, who is our loot'nent now, sent me ter find him, fer a letter comed by one o' our men ter-day thet were important, I guesses, and they wants ther cap'n."

"You do not know what the letter said?"

"No, Doc, ther deserter didn't tell us, but he opened it, an' then told me ter git my horse an' go an' look up ther cap'n, an' tell him he were wanted right away; but I guesses it are a letter from some o' ther spies, telling thet a train were comin' thet we c'u'd git fine pickin's off of."

"And so you started in search of the cap-tain?"

"Yas, Doc; but I intended to fu'st find you, an' tell yer thet yer c'u'd, with a party o' picked sojers, jist scoop down on ther canyon an' git ther leddy."

"I will not forget you for it, Jim; but you see I have come without the soldiers and with only my two brothers."

"Only yer two brothers?"

"Yes."

"Doc, what you three can't do, thar are no use fer any ten men I knows of tryin' the'r hands at ther job."

"How many are at the canyon?"

"Ten."

"Just the number you think we can handle, and we shall try it."

"But, Doc, I has more ter tell you"

"Well, out with it, Dead Knife."

"Ther chief hev been at ther canyon."

"Indeed! When?" and the Surgeon Scout looked anxious.

"He were thar, but not for long, an' left his nigger—Brickbat, I calls him—ter cook fer ther leddy, he says; but it are my idee he left him ter watch her an' us, too, includin' ther deserter loot'nent, fer ther cap'n don't trust nobody but hisself an' thet black imp."

"But now, Doc, I hes thet ter tell yer thet will make you red-hot."

"I am ready to hear it, Jim," was the remark, in a perfectly calm voice.

"Who does yer think ther cap'n are?"

"The vilest wretch unchanged."

"You has got him down thar as close as his own mother c'u'd; but he are somebody else."

"Who?"

"He wears a mask, yer know?"

"Yes."

"Waal, I went up t'other day an' tuk a lie-down under a tree jist opposite ther cap'n's tepee, which are next to ther cabin."

"I dropped off ter sleep, an' I was woke up by talkin', an' thar I see ther cap'n, as I

didn't know were in camp, comin' out o' ther cabin."

"I laid quiet, fer ther thicket kept him from seein' me, an' he went inter his tepee."

"Ther nigger went down toward ther t'other tepees, ter keep ther men back, I guesses, while ther cap'n were doin' thet which broke me all up."

"Ther flap o' ther tepee were up, an' I seen right inter it, an' I seen him jist as plain as I gazes on you now."

"You knows we hes never seen his face?"

"So it is said."

"None but ther nigger, Brickbat; but he hes."

"Waal, I seen I were ter hev a cirkis an' git a look at his pictur'."

"Fu'st he tuk off ther close he hed on an' put on others thet were thar."

"Then he takes off his hat, an' next comes them red wings."

"Then it were, Doc, thet I wanted ter git upon my hind legs an' howl with spasms."

"What did you see?" asked Night Hawk, eagerly.

"The devil, of course," answered Broncho Bill, while White Beaver uttered no word and remained with unmoved face.

"Yas, I saw the devil, Pard Broncho, but not ther one I 'spected ter."

"Doc, yer know thet long yaller mustache ther cap'n wears?"

"Yes."

"Yer know thet long, pretty gold-look ha'r?"

"Yes."

"Waal, ther ha'r come off with ther mask, an' so did ther mustache."

"Hail do you mean they were false?" and the surgeon sprung to his feet.

"False as his heart is, Pard Doc."

"Waal, I were took aback, fer I knowed ther face I seen then, an' who does yer think it were?"

"I cannot guess, Jim."

"Pard Doc, I seen him go inter ther cabin, an' thar he stayed a leetle time, and then he comed out, went to ther tepee, rigged up as the Hyena Cap'n ag'in, called ther nigger an' give him some talk what ter do, an' then cleared out o' camp."

"But who was he, Dick?" again asked the Surgeon Scout, now anxious to learn who the mysterious chief was.

"It were thet young ranchero, old Major Monkton's nephew!"

"Great God!" and Frank Powell, white as death, and trembling like a leaf shaken by the wind, was upon his feet with a bound, while Night Hawk and Broncho Bill, hardly less pale than their brother, stood gazing upon Dead Knife Jim with a look of horror stamped upon every feature.

"Fact, an' I sw'ar it," said the outlaw, when he saw the excitement his words had caused in the three men, usually unmoved under any and all circumstances.

CHAPTER XLV.

TOO TRUE.

"CAN this be possible?" said Frank Powell, regaining his customary calmness and turning once more to Dead Knife Jim.

"I'd not hev thought so, Pard Doc, unless I hed seen it with my own squinters."

"Yer see, none o' us hev got a look at ther cap'n's face, an' we didn't know jest what he looked like, tho' he did act like ther devil."

"O' late he hes been a great deal away from the command, and his being thet young cattle feller accounts fer thet now."

"We know'd our boys was actin' as cow-boys fer ther young feller, but then we considered ther cap'n hed a lig thing on hand when he sent 'em ter hire out thar, an' they didn't think thet thar boss were none other than Cap'n Kit, you bet."

"Oh, he hev worked things well, he hev, an' thet pretty leddy hev been what he were playin' his trump keerds fer all ther time."

"And now she is in his power; but can he really be the nephew of the old major?" said Night Hawk.

"There is no doubt of that, for the major and servants recognized him as such; but they all said he promised to be a wild one, and he has gone to the bad."

"Living with Mr. Joslyn as he did, he

knew Janette well, in fact was as a brother to her, and he followed the whereabouts of her father and herself, and when she went to live at Monkton Ranch he settled down apparently on a ranch, with some fell purpose regarding her, I am convinced."

"Does yer think she c'd hev tumbled to his bein' what he are?" asked Dead Knife Jim, and the question made Frank Powell start.

But Will said quickly:

"Of course not, or why would he have visited her first as Captain Hyena, and then going to his tepee change to Paul Monkton, and again visit her?"

"You are right, Will, he is playing a double game with her, as with all of us; but, Jim, are you sure he could not have had the young ranchero a prisoner, and thus—"

"No, Doc, fer I seen him change his clothes an' take off thet mask an' put it on ag'in."

"His hair are black, as yer knows; but Cap'n Kit's are yaller, an' so are ther mustache he wears."

"No, sir, I seen what I seen, an' I hes eyes like a chipmunk fer seein', you bet."

"Well, knowing what I do now, I can act intelligently."

"Now let us decide what is best to be done, boys," and Frank Powell turned to his brothers.

"Rescue Janette at once," said Will.

"Yes, we must get her out of the canyon, and then we can look up Captain Kit," added Night Hawk.

"How is you ter rescuo ther gal?" asked Jim.

"We can lower ourselves into the canyon by lariats, which I have made into a kind of ladder, and bring her up that way and get her to the fort in safety."

"Then we can look up the Red Angels," said Broncho Bill.

"Ther nigger sleeps in ther tepee near ther cabin, an' ef yer wakes him yer rouses a roarin' lion."

"All right, we'll clip the lion's claws, then."

"Thet will rouse ther menagerie further down ther canyon."

"We'll have to tame them, then," answered Broncho Bill.

"Waal, ef it can be did, you kin do it, an' I only wishes I c'd j'ine yer; but I hain't no traider ter tarn ag'in' my pards, so yer kin work ther best way yer kin, gents, while I are glad I are out o' ther rackit."

"And where do you go, Dead Knife?" asked the Surgeon Scout.

"I goes ter look up ther cap'n, an' then stan' ready ter keep out o' ther way of ther man with ther rope."

"The hangman?"

"Yas, he are interestin' me jist now, fer I believes ther Red Angels is goin' ter git wiped out, an' then I hes ter look around fer some other biz thet will pay me a livin'."

"Come to me, Jim, when you need a job, and I will give you one."

"Thankee, Doc, I'll consider it; but ef I makes a diskivery o' any importance, I'll look you up, an' don't yer go an' fergit it."

"Now I'd like ter be perlite enough ter be at home, seein' as you gents intend callin' on my camp; but jist now I finds it convenient ter be away; but I hopes yer'll excoose me."

"Now good-by, pards, an' I wishes yer luck in gittin' ther leddy out o' ther lion's den."

With this, Dead Knife Jim mounted his horse and rode off, while the Wizard Trio, leading their animals, penetrated further into the hills, Broncho Bill acting as guide to the spot where they could command a view of the canyon.

CHAPTER XLVI.

AGAINST DESPERATE ODDS.

WITH darkness about them, it was slow work for the Powell Pards to make their way through the hill-lands.

But after an hour's climb through the timber they reached a spot where the horses could be left in safety, and at the same time improve their rest by feeding on the grass that grew luxuriantly upon all sides.

To rest their horses thoroughly, so that they would be ready for flight if it came to it, the Trio unsaddled and unbridled them, staking them out with lariats.

Then taking the extra lariats, which Broncho Bill had made into a rope-ladder, they walked on toward the summit of the hill into which the canyon penetrated.

Broncho Bill led the way unerringly although he had only been once there before, and the timber made the darkness dense.

"Do you see that glimmer of light, yonder?" he asked, as a reflection was cast against the tree-tops.

Both White Beaver and Night Hawk saw the light, and said so.

"That comes from the fires in the canyon," cautioned Broncho Bill, and ten minutes after they were on the edge of the cliff overhanging the ravine below.

Peering over, they saw a smoldering fire in front of the tepee near the cabin, while down the canyon were several other fires burning brightly, just beyond the row of tepees which blocked up the way.

Around these fires sat five men, all of them smoking their pipes and having evidently just finished their supper.

"The Brickbat, as Dead Knife Jim calls him, has retired early, for his fire is dying out and he is nowhere to be seen," said Broncho Bill.

"There is no light in the cabin, either," remarked White Beaver, whose eyes were riveted upon the prison of Janette.

"She has doubtless sought rest, and I wish yonder men would follow her example," said Night Hawk.

"There are but five there."

"True, Will, but there are doubtless more in the tepees, besides a guard which must be kept at the entrance to the canyon."

"But is not that a rope hanging down from that tree on the other side?" and the surgeon pointed to what had caught his eye.

"Yes, it is a rope," remarked Night Hawk, while Will Powell said:

"It will come in useful for their necks; but what do you make her out, Doctor Frank?" and he turned to the surgeon who had leveled his field-glass upon it.

"It is a rope extending over the limb of that tree, and at the lower end is a pile that looks like a rope-ladder."

"Ah! a means of escape out of the canyon if driven to it."

"I tell you that Captain Hyena is a tassel-top, and guards against surprises."

"You are right, Will; but as soon as those five men turn in, we will see if he can guard against the surprise that we will give his camp," and Frank Powell began to uncoil the lariat-ladder and make the end fast to a tree growing near the edge of the cliff.

One by one, as they finished their pipes, the five outlaws dropped out of the circle and retired to the tepees to sleep, while a sixth man came up the canyon from its entrance, and also disappeared from view.

"Six, anyhow, the negro seven, and without doubt number eight is on guard down the canyon, while there must be another around somewhere."

"That gives us only three apiece to get away with, and if we are surprised, our first shots will reduce them to six."

"Oh, I don't see any trouble in the work we have to do," said Broncho Bill, rather enjoying the prospect of the fight against odds.

"Remember, Will, we wish to rescue Janette without waking a man, if possible."

"If we do alarm the camp, you take Janette and go up the ladder and George will follow you."

"And what will brother Frank do?" asked Will.

"I'll keep the devils back until you get a good start with Janette."

"Now, Frank, you are always good at planning, but you have slipped up on this arrangement, has he not, George?"

"It has that look, Will."

"But I cannot see how, boys, for—"

"Then let me open your eyes, Frank."

"You say that I am to retreat with Janette, and George is to follow."

"Now it is not the polite thing for a gentleman to go up-stairs behind a lady, let alone a ladder, and as I am a stickler for etiquette, you know, I say, if we alarm the camp, just lock Janette in the cabin and we stand outside and pick off the devils as they crowd us."

"Then we can make a retreat in style."

"Do you see, Frank?"

"Yes, I see that you boys won't desert

me, and that it is live or die together," answered Frank Powell, with feeling.

"That is just it, Frank," said Night Hawk.

"All right, boys, have it as you will; but we must get away without alarming the outlaws if we can, and if not, we must fight it out right there in the canyon."

"See, no one is visible now, so let us begin work."

"I will go down first."

"No, Frank; I am the lightest, you know, and we are not so sure of our lariats, while you know I step so lightly you all called me Velvet Foot when I was a boy, and I can peep into the tepee and see if I can hear that Brickbat snoring."

"By the way, have you any chloroform in your case?"

"Yes, I will get it for you," and stepping back to where he had placed his coat, he took out the small medicine-case and handed the vial of chloroform to Will, who remarked:

"Thank you, Frank; I'll just give Brickbat a smell of this to quiet him for half an hour."

Then the end of the ladder was lowered over the cliff and gently and noiselessly let down into the canyon.

Swinging himself over as fearlessly as a sailor might have done, his pistols in his belt, his repeating rifle slung at his back, Broncho Bill went down the ladder as nimbly as a cat, and glided to the open flaps of the tepee, while his brothers began to quickly follow him.

Within all was silent, and after an instant's hesitation, the young ranchero boldly and coolly entered.

A moment he remained within, and then came out, just as Night Hawk and Frank Powell reached the tepee.

"He is not at home."

"Who, the negro?"

"Yes, Frank, the Brickbat."

"It cannot be possible that Captain Hyena makes him stand guard in the cabin over Janette?"

"We can soon see, Frank."

Together they swiftly glided to the door of the cabin.

It was locked, but, whether from within or without, they could not tell.

"Knock, Will," said the surgeon, and Broncho Bill obeyed.

No answer came.

"Knock again, for we must get in."

Again the knock was unanswered, and a third time it was repeated.

Just then a voice called out from down the canyon:

"Who in thunder is that knockin' thar?"

"Don't yer know ther cap'n left at sunset with ther gal?"

A cry of mingled rage and disappointment broke from the lips of the Surgeon Scout; but it was quickly checked by Night Hawk, who put his hand upon his mouth, while he answered in the dialect of the border:

"I thoughted the nigger were here, pard."

"No, ther nigger is gone with 'em; but who is you?"

As he spoke, the man advanced from the lower tepees, when suddenly, in a voice that rung like a trumpet, and sent a hundred echoes through the canyon:

"Up with your hands, sir, or die."

"We are the Wizard Trio."

A yell burst from the man's lips, but whether in warning to his comrades, or in fright, no one knew, while he turned to run; but a shot from the surgeon's pistol sent him headlong to the earth.

"Come, boys, let us take the offensive," cried Frank Powell, as he bounded down toward the tepees, from which the men were emerging in alarm, and with their weapons ready for use.

Then the music of the revolvers began in dead earnest, and the advancing trio looked like nten on fire, so constant was the ring of their revolvers, while the outlaws, half dazed and not knowing what their foes numbered, fired at random and then turned in flight.

Dropping upon his knees from a bullet wound in his leg, Broncho Bill did not for an instant cease his work, while Night Hawk, with his right arm hanging limp by his side, kept his revolver playing with his left.

As for Frank Powell, the most conspicuous, from his size, of the Trio, he remained un-

hurt and darted in chase of the fleeing bandits, followed by Night Hawk.

Through the tepees they went, and a prisoner was captured, by White Beaver, who ran like a deer and caught him by the shoulder, striking up the revolver turned upon him.

"I want you, villain," he said, hoarsely.

"Shoot me then, now you has got me," was the sullen reply.

"No, I'll keep you for the hangman; but tell me, where is your chief?"

"Out of the scrape as usual.

"His father, the devil, takes care o' him."

"And his captive?"

"The girl?"

"Yes, *my wife!*"

"He took her with him."

"When?"

"They left at dark."

"Where are they going?"

"I don't know."

"Who else went with them?"

"The Black Bravo."

"The negro, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Any one else?"

"Yes, two of the boys."

"Why did he go?"

"Dunno; he came here to-night, when we wasn't expectin' him, an' lit out with ther gal an' them I tell you; but he said he would be back in a few days, an' fer us to remain here."

"How many were there here?"

"Ten."

Frank Powell glanced up the canyon, and his eyes falling upon four dead bodies, and then his prisoner, he said:

"Five have escaped."

"It looks that way; but I'm thinkin' some o' 'em are wounded, fer when you three pards come down the canyon rattling your revolvers, I'm durned ef I didn't think you was a buzz-saw on fire."

"But what are you going to do with me?"

"That they will decide at the fort."

"Now I'll see that you will be certain to get there," and Frank Powell securely bound his prisoner, and hastened back with him to his brothers, who were sitting by the fire near the cabin, examining the nature of the wounds they had received.

Just as he reached them, firing was heard far down the canyon, and the outlaw said:

"The men you left at our pony corral are headin' off our boys from a ride."

"I guess you've done for the band o' Red Angels, pards."

"You don't mean that all the band was encamped here?"

"Nigh about, for there was ten here, the cap'n has two an' the nigger with him; Dead Knife Jim is off on courier work, an' the Deserter Lieutenant, as we calls the soldier who joined us, has two men off on a raid with him, and there might be a straggler or two more; but I guess you've broke the backbone of the Red Angels of the Overland."

"Not until I have killed your chief," savagely said Frank Powell.

"You'll find him hard to kill, Pard Doctor."

"He'll die hard, no doubt; but I have that duty to perform, and I shall not neglect it."

"Now, Will, I must look at the wounds you and George have received, and which, I trust, are not serious."

"Mine does not worry me as much as to know what that firing meant down the canyon," said Broncho Bill.

"Perhaps the captain is coming back," suggested the outlaw prisoner.

"Such may be the case, Frank, so you be on the lookout, for I can look after Will's wound, and he after mine, as neither of them are serious," Night Hawk remarked.

"Yes, you take a little look down the canyon, Frank, and if you need us, howl, and I'll come, if I have to ride this Red Angel, and you bet he'll fly with me if I dig my spurs into him."

"Come, my man, sit right there where I can mount you, if I need you for a horse, for I cannot walk with this game leg some of your fellows gave me," and Broncho Bill pointed with his pistol to a seat near him,

and the outlaw took the hint and sat down, while Frank Powell walked rapidly down the canyon to reconnoiter.

CHAPTER XLVII.

AN OUTLAW ALLY.

As Frank Powell went on his way down the canyon, he made up his mind, come what might, he intended to strike the trail of Captain Kit in the morning and follow it to the end.

His brothers were both wounded, so must return to the fort.

If severely wounded he would himself return with them to the fort; but if not, and he felt sure that they were merely flesh wounds, he would lose no time in pushing on after Captain Hyena.

He had been anxious to at once look to the injuries which Night Hawk and Broncho Bill had received, but they were no mean surgeons themselves, and each could care for the other, while he attended to the more urgent duty of seeing what new danger threatened them.

He hoped that it was Captain Hyena returning, and that the firing had been caused by the fugitive outlaws moving suddenly upon him.

But, whoever it was, they would find him a dangerous man to face just then.

With the lithe step of an Indian he went down the canyon, halting at every sound, and seeking the deep shadows, until he had nearly reached the end.

Then he heard a rush of hoofs coming toward him.

To retreat to the cabin would be impossible, in time to aid his brothers up to the top of the cliff, and he would not have them taken by surprise.

His shots at a foe would put them on their guard, and make them seek shelter in the cabin, and he would retreat slowly, for the hoofs told him there was a large force coming.

Seeking shelter behind a wash on one side of the canyon, he threw his repeating rifle on the bank, ready for use, and waited.

Nearer and nearer the trampling of hoofs came.

"That fellow deceived me, for there are a number of horsemen coming yonder, and the band has not been wiped out."

"But I'll make a record right here before they drive me back or kill me, and wounded though my brave brothers are, they will make another for themselves, when I have been ridden down."

He spoke the words firmly, and meant them.

The loss of Janette, and the belief that her abductor and his band were coming back, made him desperate.

A moment of waiting, and he raised his rifle.

Then into sight dashed a galloping mass.

A less cool man might have fired upon them; but the Surgeon Scout coolly looked them over, and said:

"Those horses have not a rider upon them."

"They are from the outlaws' corral."

Then the drove dashed by up the canyon, and the surgeon waited.

He knew that they had a driver, or drivers. Nor was he mistaken. A moment more a horseman came in sight.

Still Powell did not fire, and the man drew rein within ten paces of him.

"Go on, yer critters, an' them Powell Pards kin take yer in as a present from me, ef they shoot half of ye afore they finds yer hes no riders," said the horseman.

"Ho, Jim!"

Quick as a flash a revolver was thrust forward by the horseman, and he cried:

"Who is yer that calls Jim?"

"Speak, or I fires, an' I kin hit yer from ther sound o' yer voice, fer I hes kilt wolves from ther yelp."

"But I am not a wolf, Jim."

"Pard Doc, it are you, ef it hain't, scalp me," cried Dead Knife Jim, as the Surgeon Scout stepped out before him.

"Yes, Jim, and what are you doing here, when we left you on the other side of the hills."

"Yer see, I c'u'dn't resist ther temptation ter see yer sail in on ther boys, so I rid round, lickerty split, and were jist at ther mouth o' ther canyon here when I heerd ther powder

music up yonder, and next came ther rattle o' ther boys' feet, as though ther devil were arter them."

"Waal, says I, ef they is heelin' it in thet style they'll make fer ther corral ter git the'r hosses, an' as them Powell Pards hes got away with them many pilgrims, they desarnes ther hosses."

"So off I rides to ther corral, an when I heerd ther pilgrims a-comin', pantin' like hounds, I jist shouts out:

"'Thar they is, boys! fire low, an' let 'em have it!'

"Pard Doc, I then rattled my six, an' yer should have seen them sinful robbers tarn tail an' git down ther valley."

"I declar' I don't think we hed a hoss in ther lay-out that c'u'd keep 'em company in thet race."

"Waal, while I were laffin' they was runnin', an' I guesses they is about twenty-three miles from here now, ef they keepped on."

"Then I jist druv ther hosses out o' ther corral, headed 'em up ther canyon, an' was goin' ter leave 'em fer yer ter take care of, an' hunt another kentry for myself, when you sings out to me."

"But hes yer got ther leetle wife back ag'in, how many o' 'em did yer slew, an was arry o' yer brothers hurted?"

"Jim, my two brothers were wounded, but not seriously, and the captain left at sunset, with two men, the negro, and my wife."

"Lordy! is thet so?"

"Yes, he came into camp shortly after you left this afternoon, I imagine, and departed immediately; but we cleaned out those he left there."

"Now, I should shout that you did, fer thar were but five of 'em thet I seen come tearin' through the timber."

"But I have a prisoner up the canyon."

"Who are he?"

"I do not know, nor do I care."

"Jist tell me how he looks."

"A large man, with red hair and beard."

"Red Larry thet are, an' ther worst o' ther lot, bad as we all is."

"Well, he'll go to the fort, where he'll get his jist punishment."

"Waal, I'm glad I are free ter skip, an' I guesses I'll light out, so I makes you a present o' ther nags I druv up ther canyon."

"Jim, do you want a job?"

"It are jist what I wants."

"With me?"

"Lordy, Doc, I'd hev ter tarn honest ter sarve you."

"You can be honest enough if you like."

"And you kin give me a leetle work ter do?"

"Yes."

"Killin'?"

"It will be killing if driven to it! Jim; but I want you to go with me and serve me."

"I'll do it."

"My brothers are both wounded, and I must go with them back to the fort, so I wish you to take the trail of the Hyena, follow it up, stay with him, and leave me word in some way, where he has left my wife."

"I will follow at once, coming back here to strike your trail as soon as I can get back from the fort, so leave me signs along the way, and if you catch up with the chief, and join him, when he makes a stoppage for good, come back on the track and meet me."

"Will you do this for me?"

"Doc, I'm itchin' ter be honest."

"I hev did thet which oughter hang me, but I tuk ter you, arter I knowed yer, same as a duck do ter water, an' a Irishman do ter beer, an' yer is ther squa'est piece o' bone an' flesh thet I ever seen put up in the shape o' man, an' yer brother pards is jist like yer."

"Now I don't like tarnin' traitor, even to a snake, an' as long as Cap'n Kit stuck ter murderin' an' robbin' I were his right bower an' held trumps in deviltry all ther time; but when he goes back on you, thet saved his life, an' runs off with thet leetle gal, then I are his inimy clean through, an' your friend, so here I goes in your service."

"Jim, here is my hand, and you shall not regret your act."

"Now it will not do for you to be seen by the outlaws up the canyon, so just camp on the chief's trail and take it at dawn."

"Remember, there are the chief, my wife, the negro, and two of the men, with

three pack-horses, making eight animals in all."

"I onderstan', Doc, an' ther chief are as himself, are he?"

"Yes, he wears his mask, for it is evident that my wife does not yet know him as the young ranchero."

"Well, Doc, I are off, an' you shall see signs that I are on ther trail."

"Good-by, Jim, and take this, for you may have use for it," and the surgeon held out some money.

"What are it?"

"Money."

"Doc, I hes plenty; it were not got squar', but it buys what yer wants all ther same, even ef I wanted ter parchis a Bible or pra'ers fer ther dead."

"No, Doc, keep yer honest money, an' let me git rid o' mine that are queer."

"Well, Jim, I'm off, and I hope to see you soon."

With a grasp of the hand, the men, so strangely made friends parted, and Doctor Powell returned up the canyon.

He found that the drove of horses had given his brothers a start, and they had prepared to receive an overwhelming force of foes, as he had.

But their coolness also prevented them from firing, until they could see an enemy to fire at, and the horses dashed past the cabin to the head of the canyon and came to a halt there.

"Well, Frank, we are glad to see you back, for we were getting anxious," said Will Powell.

"And I have been anxious about you, boys, and will now take care of those wounds."

"But what was the trouble down the canyon?" asked Night Hawk George.

"Oh, I didn't see the runaway outlaws, and these horses coming up the canyon nearly run over me, and knowing that we had the means of getting out of here, I returned to look after you."

"Now who has the worst wound for me to look after?"

"Will."

"George."

"You seem to be divided in your opinion, boys, so I'll take you first, Will, as you can't walk and George can."

The wound was discovered to be in the thigh, and the bullet had barely missed making a very ugly injury.

But the surgeon dressed it well, Broncho Bill smoking a cigar the while, and never flinching while it was probed.

Then George Powell's turn came, and he was found to be twice wounded, one bullet glancing on a rib, and cutting its way out, and another going through the fleshy part of the arm.

"I had no idea that you were so severely hurt, boys, or I would have looked after you at once."

"Oh, don't mind us, Frank, for we could hold our own in a fight pretty well yet," said George.

"Well, we had better start at once for the fort, and—"

"Don't you give up the trail of that devil, Frank."

"No, we can go on alone, and take this prisoner with us, too."

"Yes, we'll tie him and make him do the work," said Broncho Bill.

"No, I will return with you, for I shall not lose the trail of Captain Kit, as I will explain to you at another time."

"Now I'll get the horses, lariat them together, and then go up on the cliff and ride our three animals around, so that you can have saddles to ride on."

"In the mean time, get what rest you can, for it will be some hours before I am back."

And the Surgeon Scout was right, for it was nearly dawn when the party rode out of the canyon, with the outlaws' booty packed upon the captured horses, which formed quite a drove of excellent animals, and, as Broncho Bill remarked:

"We're enough to mount a cavalry company."

"Yes, and they are just what the quartermaster is in need of," rejoined Night Hawk.

"We have done well, boys; but there is one thing I shall not give up until it is finished to my satisfaction," was the stern re-

sponse of White Beaver, and his brothers knew that his words meant that he would yet track Captain Kit to death.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

ONCE MORE ON THE TRAIL.

WITHOUT accident, but after a long and hard, hard ride for the two wounded men, the Powells arrived at the fort, and the Surgeon Scout made his report to Major Benteen.

"You have certainly done splendidly, Powell, and all are to be congratulated upon your most daring work."

"Why, I never heard of such a daring deed, as for three men to deliberately descend into the den of outlaws, where there were known to be three to one against you, and perhaps as many more."

"The horses the quartermaster will credit you and your brothers with, and there is little doubt but that you have broken the back of the Red Angels of the Overland by your brilliant achievement."

"As for your prisoner, it is hardly necessary to try him, but he shall be, and his hanging shall promptly follow, unless you can use him to find out the chief."

"No, major, he knows nothing about the chief, and is guilty, so I wash my hands of him."

"Very well, he shall soon be 'toes up under the sod and the dew,' as they say out here; but you cannot know how sorry I am, Powell, for your two brothers, who you say are wounded more severely than you thought."

"Yes, sir, the lack of proper rest, and the long jaunt, has done them some harm; but they will now get along all right, so that I can leave them."

"Then you go again?"

"Oh, yes, Major Benteen, my work has just begun, and I must depart just as soon as I see that my brothers will not need me."

"My desire is to go by my brother Will's ranch, and let my mother know that he is all right, and then to follow up the trail of the Red Angel chief."

"But can you do so, after days have elapsed?"

"Oh, yes, major, for I will have a comrade to aid me, and one I can wholly trust."

Frank Powell then told Major Benteen about Dead Knife Jim, and all that he had told him regarding Captain Kit's being none other than Major Monkton's nephew.

It was decided not to let the secret be known to the old major, to distress him, and as to Dead Knife Jim, the major said:

"If he aids you to track down that arch-fiend, Powell, I will get him a pardon."

"I think with you there is good in the man, and I am glad that you will have so good an ally in the work before you; but I do wish you would accept my offer, of Lieutenant Ames and a dozen men, to go with you, where you found it necessary to go."

"No, thank you, Major Benteen, for mine is a revenge trail, and I had better go alone, for I tell you frankly that this great world is not large enough for Captain Hyena and myself to live in."

"Now, sir, I will make my arrangements to depart as soon as I can get off," and, with kind wishes from all, Frank Powell rode away from the fort the following evening, and those that bade him farewell knew that he would be as true as a bloodhound to the trail of his foe when once he should strike it.

After a short visit to his mother, who, as I have before said, dwelt upon the ranch of her son, Broncho Bill, the Doctor Scout started for the canyon where he had parted from Dead Knife Jim.

He arrived there just at sunset, and went into a lone camp, determined to get a good night's rest for himself and horses, for he had with him a led animal, that he might alternate in riding them, and thus not press either one too hard.

With the dawn he was on his way once more, following the trail of the Overland robber and his victim from the starting-point at the canyon.

He had not gone far when he came upon signs which Dead Knife Jim had left for him, and from that time on the traces left by his outlaw ally were frequently seen.

In places where the trail of the Red Angels

was entirely obliterated, owing to the time that had elapsed since it was made, the signs of Dead Knife Jim were plain, for he had followed close on the heels of the outlaw, and the Surgeon Scout congratulated himself again and again upon his fortune in having such a good ally.

Away from the rolling prairie lands, over streams and hills, through valleys, straight to the mountain country of Colorado the trail led, and untiringly the Surgeon Scout hung to it, until at last he came to "signs" that riveted his attention.

These signs were read by him aloud, as follows:

"Dead Knife Jim here overtook that Hyena Captain."

"Now I will see if he still leaves a marked trail for me."

"If he does, before very long Captain Hyena, Captain Kit, Paul Monkton, or whatever name or *alias* you go under, we will meet face to face, and you will answer to me for the wrong you have done poor Janette, ay, and the wrong you have done me, too."

CHAPTER XLIX.

CONCLUSION.

Two men stood together in a wild but picturesque valley in Colorado.

At their feet lay three prostrate forms, one of them wearing a mask that concealed his face, but it had been partially torn aside, as though by a rude hand.

Those lying upon the ground were dead, apparently, for they were motionless, and bullet wounds were in the forehead of two, and of the third the clothing was stained by a flow of life-blood from his side.

The face of the latter was a strangely handsome one, but it has long been hidden from the reader under the mask of crimson wings that concealed the identity of Captain Kit, the Red Angel of the Overland, though it was occasionally seen in the person of Paul Monkton, the young ranchero.

One of the two men standing upright above the slain was none other than Dead Knife Jim, his one hand holding the bridle-rein of two horses, one his own, the other belonging to his companion.

That companion the reader has followed through these pages as Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout of the Platte.

His face is white now, as though life had left his heart, too; but his eyes gleam with a slumbering fire that show his every sense to be moved to intensity, and that his feelings are suppressed only by the greatest effort of self-control.

Presently Dead Knife Jim speaks:

"Pard Doc, yer trail is ended."

"Yes; there lies the bitterest foe of my life, and the man that has done me the deadliest wrong."

"And he died without telling you where to find your wife, you say, fer I hung back, as you told me, pard, ter let yer face ther three of 'em, so didn't heer what he said."

"Yes, Jim, I believe that she is dead, or at any rate, I must so believe from his words; so let the dead past bury its dead," was the low, sad response.

"Does yer mean ter bury them pilgrims, Pard Doc?"

"Yes, we will bury them yonder, and then I will know that that man no longer lives."

"See, there are graves yonder already, two of them, and unoccupied," and Frank Powell pointed beneath some trees, where were visible two holes that had been dug long before, but which had never found occupants.

"Yas, Pard Doc, them was pervided too previous, I guesses, fer they had ought to git ther corpse afore they prepar's fer ther plantin'," remarked Dead Knife Jim; and, as he examined them, he continued:

"One are large enough fer two, so inter it goes them pilgrims, while ther cap'n, accordin' ter his rank, kin bunk in t'other all alone."

"So here goes, an' a little shovelin' o' ther dirt will kiver 'em."

"Now, I hain't no undertaker, but I hes been chief mourner at so many fun'rals that I kin do ther work prime, so you jist stan' off an' look at me."

Powell turned sadly away, glad to escape the work of burying his foes, and walked on down the valley.

Once from under his eye, Dead Knife Jim threw in the dirt rapidly with his single arm. Doctor Powell seeming to overlook the fact that he had but one hand for the work.

But Jim was not going to trouble himself too much by work, so after having taken from the bodies their valuables and arms, and done them up in a blanket, which he tied to his saddle, he departed, following after the Surgeon Scout, who was slowly walking along, apparently in too deep thought to hardly be conscious of what he was doing.

"They is planted prime, Doc, an' now my sarvices is ended," he said, as Frank Powell took his bridle-rein from him and mounted his horse.

"Jim, you have been a true pard to me, and I will never forget you."

"Now I want you to go down to my little claim, which you know of, and work it for all it will bring."

"If you find a fortune in it, give me half; if not, take what it will pay you for yourself."

"But give up your evil life, and expect from me, some day, an official pardon for the crimes of the past."

"If the world goes hard with you, and you need a friend, look me up."

"Good-by, for as you go northward, and I southward, we part here."

"Good-by, Pard Doc, and don't you forget that Dead Knife Jim or Devil Jim, Esquire, as they calls me, are your pard to eternity."

With this the two men parted, Dead Knife Jim to go to the Colorado mines, and Frank Powell, a saddened, changed man, to retrace his way to the fort.

While he had been absent, changes had come upon the dwellers at the fort, for the gallant major had been promoted to lieutenant-colonel. Night Hawk had settled down upon the ranch where Paul Monkton had once lived and turned ranchero; Broncho Bill had bought Major Monkton's place, for the old man, learning of what his nephew had been, had sold out his interests on the border, and, with his faithful negroes, had returned to the South to die and be laid by the side of his forefathers.

Back to his duties as post surgeon Frank Powell went, with saddened mien and aching heart, though with a kindly smile and pleasant word for every one; but that the iron had entered deep into his soul was proven by his words to Colonel Benteen after his return from his revenge trail, when he said:

"Yes, colonel, I avenged her, and I righted my wrong by killing that man."

"But, alas! Janette is lost to me forever."

After that the name of Janette, his girl-wife, was never mentioned before him by those who knew what he had suffered in the past.

THE END.

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